



PRINCE RICHARD

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BALLARD BROWNLEE McAVOY



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PRINCE RICHARD

BY

BALLARD BROWNLEE McAVOY.

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PRINCE RICHARD.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

PHILIP, King of England.

KING OF FRANCE.

RICHARD, son of King of England by former Queen, and Prince of Wales.

EDWARD, son of King of England by present Queen.

DUKE OF YORK, the King's adviser.

DUKE OF WARWICK, } friends
DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, } of the
DUKE OF SALISBURY, } King.

DUKE OF BEDFORD, } in league
DUKE OF SOMERSET, } with the
Queen.

REGNAULT, French ambassador.

BELVILLE, keeper of the tower.

ASHLAND, a messenger.

ASTRA, a soothsayer.

GILBERT, Richard's man.

A DOCTOR.

AN OFFICER.

A SERVANT TO YORK.

AN ATTENDANT.

TWO MURDERERS.

THREE CITIZENS.

THREE SERVANTS.

TWO MESSENGERS.

BLANCH, Queen of England.

ALINE, } daughter of the King

MARGARET, } of France.

CONSTANCE, her foster-mother.

GERTRUDE, the Queen's maid.

Lords, ladies, soldiers, attendants, citizens, &c.

SCENE :

*1st Scenc. Act II., in France;
the rest in England.*

TIME :

Medieval Days.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

LONDON.—*A Room in the King's Palace.*

Enter the QUEEN and SOMERSET.

Queen. No, Somerset, this is not vile in thee.
The evil of ill deeds is measured by
The end attain'd: a puny theft is crime;
Who steals great sums is lauded as one wise;
The harlot, fallen to her shame for bread,
Is scorn'd and shunn'd as poison to the touch,

Whiles with the shield of sin-forgiving gold,
 To blind weak mortal eyes with magic sheen,
 Where love doth not exist, but gain is all;
 Oft ladies stain the sacred marriage rite,
 And sell their virtue to a title hold.
 Men judge this as not ill which is most ill:
 The greater ill they deem the lesser blot,
 In blackest ink they see the whitest spot.

Somerset. Thou arguest well to make this wrong a right;
 But conscience hath a mighty pleading tongue,
 That drowns thy voice, and deafs mine ear to thee.
 Wherein doth serve thine argument but thus:
 If I be not decried, I sin the more,
 If carping mouths I fill, I sin the less,
 But yet I sin if either be the way.

Queen. Dost love me, Somerset?

Somerset. My gracious queen,
 Where'er thou art, there is the day most fair;
 Where thou art not, black night and deep despair.
 Thou art my life.

Queen. These words are Somerset,
 And own the burden of his sweetest song;
 But where is Somerset, himself, in act,
 Since he doth now oppose my dearest wish?
 When was the time that I did bid thee do,
 That thou, forthwith, hast not my biddance done,
 Obedience bowing to thy love in all?
 And wilt thou fail me at the tidal wave,
 Forsake me at the flooding of my hopes?

Somerset. The king hath bath'd me so in favor's smile,
 Hath loaded me with rich and regal gifts,
 A burning shame sits here—— [Points to his breast.]

Queen. False fire, my lord!
 Thy brow is noble nobleness itself,
 Why, scarlet shame would fly from thee in shame,
 And fear, pale fear, would be afraid of thee,
 And gasp for breath at thy great valor's sight.

Somerset. Here, midst his choicest flow'rs that grace
 his throne,
 I am a rose, chief blossom in his eye;
 For that his pleasure doth recline on me,

For that his lavish hand hath gilded me,
Casting my velvet petals to the winds,
Shall I repay him with a pricking thorn?
O, queen, this is most base to so benign
A king.

Queen. A king? A milk and water king!
That hath no zest for glory's fiery path,
Nor craves for conquest at the risk of peace;
Whose heart's as soft as down on snowy dove,
Whose eyes rain liquid pearls at ghastly woe;
Of royalty he hath no attributes.

Somerset. Did not our purpose taste of treachery,
I would be apt; but treason to my king——

Queen. Why call'st him king? Why, he's a bauble king,
A playing puppet, wielding England's mace
As his adviser, wise old York, commands.

Somerset. As York commands! Old York, with silver'd
beard,

With hoary, flowing locks, and rheumy eyes,
With knowing looks, and proud, majestic air.
I hate thee, York, for that the king loves thee,
And gives his ears unto thy golden lips,
I hate thee that thy wisdom sways the state.—
What! men have done what I would do.

Queen. [*Aside*] Methought
Old wounds of ancient broils would gape anew
At mention of York's name. I feel he's mine:
Medicines have power to soothe the body's pain,
But cannot balm a lacerated mind.

Somerset. [*Aside*] A second view shows not so base as
first,

For basest baseness lies within this base:
Old York should not be favor'd so; that's base:
The king is not the king, but York; that's base:
And York I hate; that stands in bas-relief.
What doth undo the base we call not base,
Then I'm not base if I dethrone the king.

Queen. No more 'tis crime to shift unkingly kings
Than lion to depose a braying ass,
The righteous strong to rout a weaker foe,
Or wise man to supplant an arrant fool.

The crown that rounds the temple of my lord
 Must rest upon my son. If thou wilt aid
 To wake the dog rebellion from his sleep,
 Defeat the king, and crown my Edward king,
 Thy love shall be a precious jewel to me,
 And thou wilt oust old York and be his York.

Somerset. Sweet queen, I yield; my love o'ercomes all
 else;

Whose rosy glass reflects a rose to me,
 And with this kiss I pledge thee loyalty. [*Kisses her hand.*]

Queen. Now thou art Somerset indeed. But haste;
 Let action follow close the heel of thought.
 In Bedford, Essex, Gloster and their friends,
 Who smart and fret beneath the lash of slights,
 That have no birth but in their touchy natures,
 Poison the mind to wither fealty;
 Fan up the spark of smouldering discontent,
 Thereon pour oily words to wax the flame,
 Till smoky war doth lower on the king.—
 Show zeal; be swift to strike.

Somerset. And so I will.

So deep I'll dive into the mire of lies,
 To daub and smear the snowy flakes of truth,
 That scarce this midnight's owl will leave his hole,
 Ere fury shall be master of these lords;
 And, straining as the bloodhound at the leash,
 To start the clash of fierce contending arms,
 They will be lightning in our enterprise.
 I will away.

Queen. My lord, in all shield me.
 Be cautious; drop no seed to sow belief
 That I do hatch and brood this plot. For Edward,
 Conditions do constrain he pose as loyal;
 To shut suspicion's penetrating eye,
 'Tis meet he be allied with the king's troops.
 Of Richard, Philip's son——

Somerset. Yea, what of Wales?

Queen. The tower, the gibbet, or the block.

Somerset. Aye, death.

Enter EDWARD.

Edward. All happiness to thee, my lord, and mother.

Somerset. Sweet Edward, health to thee.

Queen. My loving son,

Somerset hath matters to impart to thee,

Bearing upon our early morning talk.

Go thou with him.

Edward. At thy call, my lord.

Somerset. I kiss again to doubly seal my pledge.

[*Kisses her hand.*]

[*Exit Edward and Somerset.*]

Queen. Poor weak, conceited man, that loves me so,
And thinks I love in turn. What fools men are!

Clay's not more plastic in the potter's hand

Than they in ours. I mold him to my use;

His use once gone, I have no use for him.

Where women love do men but seldom sound;

Where we most love, our secret's most profound.

SCENE II. *A Room of State in the Palace.*

[*Flourish.*]

*Enter KING, QUEEN, RICHARD, EDWARD, YORK, and others,
with ASHLAND.*

King. Say, Ashland, what wouldst thou now have with us?
Who sent thee thus in haste?

Ashland. My gracious sovereign,
Thy noble subject, Warwick, true as steel,
With news——

King. Say not bad news.

Ashland. Not good, my liege.—
With news of insurrection in his camp,
Hath sped me hither on his swiftest steed.

King. O trouble, trouble, why dost now awake
To vex the soft and gentle rest of peace?
I dread this news in full: of late strange meteors

Have flash'd across the azure, star-lit skies,
 The heavens gleam'd with trailing comets' fire,
 The earth did tremble with unnatural shock,
 Last morn of all the cock did fail to crow,
 And thrice to day I tumbled from my horse.
 These things are tokens of calamity;
 They presage dire events; and I do fear
 Thy tongue more than a hissing snake.

York.

Proceed;

That we may weigh the leaden weight you bear,
 To judge what heavy measure is in need
 To weigh rebellion down.

Queen.

My son, sit here.

[*Edward sits by Queen.*]

Ashland. Where we do love, good news is swift of speech,
 But sadness makes a tardy tongue. My words,
 Like mournful prisoners in a pent-up jail,
 Are now immur'd within my mouth.

Queen.

Speak, man!

Do not you see we're all aglow to hear?

Ill tales, like winds, oft carry good to some: [*Aside to Edw.*]
 If they but knew where joy is dancing now!

Edward. [*Aside to Queen*] I tremble with delight to see
 their brows,

Which darken but at index of his news.

Queen. [*Aside to Edward*] O mark them when the
 volume's read.—List, Edward.

Ashland. My liege, brave Warwick, and great Bucking-
 ham,

Together with the noble Salisbury,

Are quarter'd in the north with all your troops;

Wherein stern discipline did seem intrenched,

And loyalty chain'd strongly to their breasts.

But strongest chains do have their weakest links,

And in this world of unexpected chance,

Where safety 'pears most safe and trueness true,

Like hanging sword of Damocles by hair,

Are pending dangers e'er our constant guests.

So, sudden as a gathering summer shower,

A whirlwind of rank treason did arise.

King. What did our generals then?

Ashland. All men could do:

Demosthenes ne'er plead like Salisbury,
And Warwick and our Buckingham were Cæsars;
But mortals cannot check the raging sea.

Richard. Were there no faithful followers in arms?
No grisly veterans of the king not cankered
With treason's baneful sore?

Ashland. Some few there were,
That strove most valiantly to stem the tide.
But it was counting rain-drops as they fall,
And matching tens against a thousand's strength.

York. Who were the ones incited this? Who brewed
This storm?

King. Go on, go on; the cause, the cause!

Queen. I prithee, Philip, be not flurried thus.

Richard. 'Tis but a squall as brief as fleeting breath,
A pack of hungry hounds to be restrained
With muzzle of cold steel and cannons' wrath.
As treason doth protrude his dragon head,
Our youth, like burning coals stirr'd by a draught,
Will be ablaze with heat of martial fire;
Then, as an egg-shell, shall we crush its skull,
And char its hideous form in glory's flame.

York. These words, Prince Richard, make my winter
spring,

Infusing new blood in my dried-up veins;
Thou hast the spirit of true Englishmen.—
My liege, have cheer: as Richard wisely says,
Revolts of present nature are short-lived.
A violent mob's as quick in death as birth,
The raging fever swiftest runs its course,
And sudden tempests soonest spend their force.
A flaw, a little blow;—then weather fair.

Ashland. Mistake me not, my lords. This is no squall.
No rising to be strangled in its birth.
No more compact, no better handled scheme
To wrest a loving king from off his throne,
Depriving him of his ancestral rights,
Hath e'er been plann'd.

King. O why delay? The cause!
Drive home the nail! The leaders of these wolves;
Their strength and numbers!

Ashland. Bedford, Essex,
And Gloster, their combin'd, united forces,
With those of many nobles they command,
Are chief and foremost instigators.
With false reports and slanders as their weapons,
They hew'd down loyalty and slaughter'd conscience;
Won to their shameful selves your shameless troops,
Whereto were added hordes of malcontents,
Who, seeing pillage mirror'd in war's glass,
In vulture-flocks came to rebellion's aid,
Until a mighty host usurps the north,
Where plunder treads with his destructive stride.

York. What of the faithful few?

Ashland. Forc'd to retreat,
Unto the hills they fled for safety;
Whose woods and caves do serve them brief respite,
From overwhelming foes, till reinforcements
Less their crying need. From thence I come.

Queen. [*Aside to Edward*] Sweet times, dear son; well
Somerset hath done.

Edward. [*Aside to Queen*] Our plan works well. But
hear the king.

King. O woe!
O woe is king and I am now his subject!
O woe drink up my crimson stream of life,
Rain dust to dry my moisty substance up,
Shrivel my flesh into a brittle clay,
That I may crumble to my native state,
And mingle with the earth and earthy king.
For what's in life that man should wish to live?
All's false, delusion, bubble, fleeting dream.
Have we our joys? Ay, joys; but merely buds,
And kill'd, whilst in their bloom, by nipping frosts;
Have we our friends? But shows and forms of friends,
Forsaking when our fortune's ebb is on,
Or adders lurking 'neath our violet loves;
Have we fair hopes? Blast'd by our fairest friends.
Is there no justice looking from yon blue?

Doth heaven smile upon these traitors' acts?
Then death embrace me in thy frigid arms;
Thy clasp is warmer than the love of man.

York. So excellent a king, my majesty,
So loving-kind, so charitable, so just;
That sanction'd naught to grind the honest poor,
Nor bent the labor'r 'neath an extra groat.
When did he e'er deny these thankless men?
Why, Bedford was a starry firmament,
And Essex, whitest lily in our thoughts.

Richard. The times are wrong; fair honor's had its day,
And keeping solemn oaths is out of fashion.
But truth and loyalty make valiant soldiers:
As one bright ray shines far in this vile world,
So, justice, flaming in our warriors' breasts,
Will burnish, with a dazzling light, their shields,
To blind deceitful treason's downcast eye.
Then shall we rout our foes as wisps of straw,
And then these wolves, these slaves, these curs, these
snakes,

Shall rue the day they broke allegiance's bond.

King. So treachery springs from unexpected nooks:
Where nobles were most noble thought it lies;
Biting the hand that honor'd them who bite.
O base ingratitude! O hearts so vile!

Queen. O wretched, heavy, mournful state. O woe!
O dreadful times!

Edward. O sorrow, sadness, gloom!
O grief! O darkness, deep-despairing hope!
O bitter times!

Queen. [*Aside to Edward*] A cozener, my son?
We struck a happy note; a merry strain.

Edward. [*Aside to Queen*] Each opposite to what I said,
I feel.

Queen. [*Aside to Edward*] More opposites than what I
said, I feel.

King. Now war, fell war, with bristling mane, is on,
To gripe us with intestine strife and shock.
O war, thou child of hell, born of two fiends,
Accursed envy is thy father, treachery
Thy mother.

Richard. 'Twas sharp envy bit these lords.

York. O envy, where dost thou not show thyself?

In whom dost thou not set thy rankling tooth?

Thou art as universal as mankind,

Thrusting thyself on all degrees of men:

Thou liest with the poor in humble bed,

And court'st the rich upon a gorgeous couch;

Rags and stately robes encompass thee alike.

Thou smack'st thy lips upon the beggar,

And holdest royal feast upon the king;

Fair youth is blighted by thy venomous bite,

And deeper furrows plough'd in wrinkled age.

O biting, gnawing, grasping envy,

The worm that undermines the character,

Thy poison'd fangs have stung these jealous men,

Corrupting this our court with infamy.

Enter MESSENGER.

Messenger. A message for York.

[*York takes papers and reads; shows excitement.*]

King. How now, good York? Why tremblest so? More
ills?

Like flitting shadows on an April day,

Thy color comes and goes.

York. A viper's thanks! [*Aside.*]

Wild, restiff anger makes me cold and hot, [*To the King.*]

Chasing my scanty blood in wanton play.

See, Richard read. [*Richard reads.*]

Richard. Herein's the ooze and mud of villainy,

The bott'm most point of vilest treachery!

My liege, look here, and turn thy love to hate,

For thou hast but mistook men all this while;

Thy dove is prov'd a crow, thy rose a thorn:

Base Somerset is chief in the revolt! [*Hands to King.*]

Queen. What, Somerset! 'tis false.

Edward. Malicious lies.

King. [*Reads*] 'Tis true, 'tis true!

O God! the keenest dagger e'er was whet,

Could not inflict so deep a wound. Methinks,

There is no gratitude in all the world.

Haste; bring him in.

[*Exit Messenger.*]

Edward. [*Aside to Queen*] How is't with you, mother?
Dost thou not quake?

Queen. [*Aside to Edward*] Nay, nay; all's well. How
is it with you, son?

Edward. [*Aside to Queen*] O very sick. I fear we are
undone. [*Rises.*]

Queen. [*Aside to Edward*] No, Somerset will not betray.
Stay, stay!

Edward. [*Aside to Queen*] No more; enough, enough.
[*Exit in hurry.*]

King. Why hurries Edward?

Queen. The room is close; a faintness sped him hence.

King. 'Tis very like. I'm sick myself.

These fumes of treason, like a noxious gas,
Infect the pure and wholesome breathing air.

Enter ATTENDANTS, with SOMERSET.

Somerset. All hail to thee, my gracious sovereign.

King. More hell than hail to thee! My lord, I have.
Here papers that I wish for you to scan.

[*Hands to Somerset.*]

'Twas by a miracle of God they fell
Into my hands.—Why, man, what troubles thee?
Thy cheeks are blanch'd. Hast thou the ague,
That thou shak'st so?

Somerset. The message sent to Belford! [*Aside.*]
My sin hath broke its bonds of secrecy,
And sounds the knell of my impending doom.
I cry thee mercy, sir! [*To the King.*]

Richard. Cry mercy, dog!
Lift up thy voice in sighs and wails and moans;
Out-sigh the sighing of the distant sea,
Out-wail the wailing winter midnight wind,
Out-moan the moaning of birth-giving dame;
Yea, howl the howling, roaring tempest down,
And we shall be as deaf to thee as stones.

York. Thou, with an angel's face, but devil's heart.
Thou noble in appear, but gross in deed,
Contemptuous traitor, spider, toad——

Somerset. [*Rushes at York*] Old fool,
 Old driv'ling, tott'ring imbecile, forbear!
 If that thy dotage held not in restraint,
 I'd smite thee to the dust-receiving earth.

York. O for the lusty blood of youth again!
 Were not my muscles soft with mellow time,
 My sinews lame with age's stiffening touch,
 My old bones fragile as the icy fringe
 That snaps and breaks upon the slightest jar,
 Thy words I'd force back in thy scorpion throat,
 And cast thy lying tongue unto the worms!

Richard. [*Rushes to Somerset*] Let Richard be thy
 proxy, York.—[*To Somerset*] Though I
 Doubt not that my true steel disdains to taint
 Itself with thy corrupted blood: 'Twould be
 A rape upon its maiden virtue.

King. Peace, peace.
 Convey him to the tower.—But yet awhile,
 I have a thing to say. O Somerset,
 'Tis more in sorrow that I speak than anger,
 Yet righteous indignation, firing my words,
 Shoots from my mouth as flaming arrow,
 For thou hast lit a sighing furnace in
 My breast.—O God! that e'er I saw this day!
 Why, in my sight thou wert a full-blown garden,
 In beauty rich, and fragrant with perfume,
 A glorious sun, reflecting brilliant rays
 Upon my court until it shone with splendor;
 A brother sharing in my joys and sorrows.
 But now thou art the rankest poison weed,
 A smoking, flameless candle, foul with smell,
 A sparkling serpent stinging even him,
 That gave the warmth wherein itself did bask.
 Is Bedford heartless wretch: then what art thou?
 Is Essex savage beast: then what art thou?
 Is Gloster fiendish brute: then what art thou?
 There is no name that's base enough for thee,
 Who, with thy fair outside, thy flowery face,
 Art like a showy, sumptuous bawdy-house,

Wherein iniquity most vile doth reign.
I'll say no more, but so: unto the tower;
There meditate, and let thy conscience prick
Until our pleasure set the date when that
Thy head shall fall.—Lead him away. Begone.

[*Somerset led away.*]

Richard. Our country's sick and cries to us for aid!
Ill humors, boils, eruptions have arisen
To blotch and mar her smooth and healthful soil.
Let every noble heart jump at her call!
To arms! to arms! ye loyal Englishmen!
Stand forth to put our royal armor on!
Turn we our blood into the bitterest gall,
Let not chaf'd lions be as fierce as we,
Be tigers gentle as the sucking lambs,
Fell pards as mild and harmless as a child,
Match'd with our deeds to quell rebellious foes.
Bray trumpets! beat thou churlish drums! blow bugles!
As message that King Philip's armies come
To wrest fair England from disloyal sons.

King. Farewell to the little peace this world allows.
Farewell, sweet sleep, to soothe my wearied brain;
Now restless toss and nightmare is my lot,
And grief will bow me as a willow tree.
I'd rather be a patient drudge, that earns
His daily crust and sleeps his nights in bliss,
Than be a king with golden rigol on,
And thus encircled in a vale of gloom.
These cares, alighting on my kingly head,
Will weight my days; make nights a horrid dread.

[*Exit with flourish.*]

SCENE III. *A Plain.*

Enter EDWARD, breathless from running,

Edward. The battle's fierce.—But for my nimble limbs
I scarce had 'scaped!—'Sblood! I thank thee, speed!
Though mother holds me spirited and brave,
Why, truth to tell, I'm timid as a doe;

Rude brawls and knocks I have no stomach for.—
My mother-queen, now wif'd unto the king,
Is second wife that's 'joyed his regal bed,
In which his first love gave to Richard birth;
Whom I do hate with a devouring hate.
My mother, too, loathes him for that he's next
In line to wear the long'd-for golden crown,
Which she doth wish to deck her only son,
For in her heart I'm writ in letters large.

[*Trumpets sound.*]

What means this quick retreat, these flying men?
O victory hath perch'd on Bedford's standards!
The king's repuls'd!—I'm with the king in feint,
But with the foe in fact: so I do win
Wherein we lose, and, losing, gain the throne.—
Now is my heart like to a pitchy night,
The fleeting clouds like fancies in my brain,
Where blackest thoughts reside, that freeze my blood,
Though why they chill, since they are born in hell,
I cannot tell. But this I surely know:
I am a coward, that shudders at my thoughts,
To think what bloody deeds my thoughts would do
If I were brave.—Soft, soft! but no; speak, tongue!
O were my thoughts but acts, I'd fire the world!
I'd make this dagger drip with Richard's blood,
As if it mourn'd his death with crimson tears;
As king I'll reign with such a rigid hand,
That all the land will cringe in abject fear.
To squander gold as though it were but dross,
I'll loose the strings of clergy's swollen purse,
And squeeze my subjects to their last poor groat.
My lust shall have no rein; but, like a weed
That steals and twines upon the fairest flower,
I'll sate it on the beauty of my realm,
Till virtue's name shall be a laughing stock.
O there will never be such king as I!
But hush, my thoughts, may deeds from them soon rise,
Yet till that day I'll keep them from men's eyes.

[*Trumpets and drums sound.*]

I must away; the armies come!

[*Exit.*]

[*Alarms and excursions. Pass forces over the stage, fighting. Then enter RICHARD and BEDFORD, and cross them over the stage, fighting.*]

Richard. Bedford, prepare thy lips to kiss cold death,
For by our holy faith thy time hath come!

Bedford. Ply on, proud prince! Thy youthful strokes
are vain,

For Bedford's life is charm'd!

Richard. Out on thee, villian!
[*Exit, fighting.*]

Enter WARWICK, BUCKINGHAM and SALISBURY.

Warwick. How goes the day?

Buckingham. Fast as our fading hope,
Which, when the matin sun peep'd o'er yon wood,
Was brighter than the new-born morn.

Salisbury. The night
Comes on apace, and brings disaster in
Its smoky wake. The blood-red sun, now sinking
To t' nether world, hath caught its gory tinge
From where the crimson stain of battle-field
Reflects the deep-dy'd soil——

Warwick. Fierce slaughter's paint.
There lie a thousand English mansions,
Now dust and clay, like unto many caskets
Rif'd of their precious jewels; for thieving death
This day is rich in booty.

Buckingham. Warwick, we're done;
We set our joyful hopes upon our troops,
Who, being fled, have fled our joy and hope.

Salisbury. Yet fought they valiantly.

Warwick. None e'er more so.

Buckingham. Demons, not men, they were.

Salisbury. But numbers won.
The rebel myriads, like swollen streams,
O'erflooding us, swept all before them.

Warwick. Too many water-drops will wear the rock,
Too many strokes will fell the stubborn oak,

Too many hounds will tire the hunted bear,
And so too many foes did weaken us.

[*A blare of trumpets and shouts.*]

What sound is that?

Salisbury. Here comes one who can tell.

Enter MESSENGER.

What news, man?

Messenger. Richard hath slain Bedford!

Buckingham. O glorious tidings!

Salisbury. Better than ten thousand's aid.

Warwick. Richard's a mighty warrior. Bedford's death
Will shake despair out of our drooping hearts,
And clothe us in fresh confidence.

Buckingham. Where's Edward?

Messenger. 'Tis several hours since he's been seen. Upon
The foe's approach he made his presence scarce;
His flight was swifter than a frighten'd deer's.

Warwick. O, he's as brave as hawk at eagle's swoop,
No more he fears than child at ghostly tale,
His courage equals woman's at a mouse.—
But come.—To-morrow's battle ends these things:
If England's rule be rebels', or the king's.

SCENE IV. *Richard, in his tent, the night before the battle.*

Richard. What is't o'clock?

Gilbert. Near midnight, my lord.

Richard. To-day's strife hath been hard; I am aweary.

Gilbert. My lord, you need a taste of rest. To soothe
The high-strung nerves, and balm the aching limbs,
There is no lotion like to sleep.

Richard. I must
To bed. Sweet sleep will greet me as I touch
The couch, for I am passing tired. —

What are the prospects for the morrow, Gilbert?

Gilbert. Fair weather, sir. The stars are all out, and
The wind, in gentle murmur, as if mourning
The slain, blows from the west.

Richard.

A good omen.—

'Twill be a bitter struggle 'gainst great odds;
Our crown and glory hang but on a thread:
O that that thread may be a hangman's noose,
To break rebellion's neck!—Hear me, Gilbert:
Take care my sword and buckler are fit; see to't.—
And wake me early; ere the sun doth rise.—
Leave me now.

[*Exit Gilbert.*]

Thou King of kings, that stills the storm-swept sea,
Lend now thine ear whilst I do plead with thee.
O Lord of hosts! great Captain of the world,
Grant us thine aid! Let not vile treason's hordes
O'ercome our loyal troops. To us be as
Thou wast to ancient Joshua. O God!
Eclipse the sun to shroud our foe in darkness,
So that, in blindness, fighting one another,
They shall destroy themselves in countless numbers.
Or, Lord, blunt thou their steel to useless worth,
Upon their heads rain down discouragement,
Plant terror in their hearts, fear in their breasts;
Infusing in their limbs the speed of wind,
In flaring letters write defeat before
Their eyes, to fly them in confusion.—
Unto thy care I do commend my soul!

[*Sleeps.*]

SCENE V. *The Queen's Room.*

Queen. All's well: Bedford and I are leagued
That Edward shall be king.—But yet there's one
Cloud in my sky of hope: Somerset lives.
One week to-day he dies; so says the king,
But whilst he lives I dread that he may tell.—
'Twere better done ere that, 'twere better Somerset
Be dead before his execution's due;
And that at once by some hand skill'd in crime,
When he's asleep, or ere he hath a pause:
He must not know when death is to arrive,
For I have heard close on the final breath,
Ere death disjoins the body from the soul,

To light a weighted conscience of the fear
Of after death, the tongue, keep'r of the mind,
Is oft persuaded to unlock the door
That's prisoner held long-standing mysteries.
Then, in the eager, horror-hearing ear,
Is pour'd confession of a dreadful deed,
As murder, theft, or lesser crime doth have
Its out. And so there is some craven scruple
Urges me to believe that Somerset,
His head upon the block, pray'r on his lips,
The stroke, to send him to the realm of night,
About to fall, with anguish in his soul,
Will cry aloud, exposing all.—
For this I find it meet that he must die,
Before the time to die, fix'd by the king.

Enter GERTRUDE.

Say, Gertrude, have you done as I did bid?

Gertrude. The men you sent for are without, your
highness.

Queen. Well, show them in and get you quickly gone.
[*Exit Gertrude.*]

A dreadful deed demands a dreadful means.

Enter MURDERERS.

These are the noted murderers whose crimes
Do chill the blood to hear them told. So well
Their cloudy brows befit their bloody acts,
Methinks their countenance alone would fright
The soul from out its house of clay ere that
A blow were struck: the wounded bear looks not
So fierce as they.—What manner of men are you?

First Murderer. We have no manner, madam; we are
unmannerly men.

Queen. No, no; what kind of men are you?

First Murderer. We are not kind; we are unkind. We
know not love, charity or gratitude. The world hath stolen
from us the lamb of gentleness, that once abided in this
land of flesh and blood, and we, in turn, have robbed wolves,

tigers and hyenas of their fierceness. Therefore, we have no sympathy: wailing widows and suffering babes we laugh at; for our hearts are stones, clasped in iron bosoms with strings of steel, which misery touches not.

Queen. I see; the world hath harmed you and soured your disposition; turned your milk of kindness into the acid of hate.

Second Murderer. True; the world hath harmed us, for which we the more have harmed the world.

Queen. Is there naught can move you?

First Murderer. Yea, gold easily moves us.

Queen. Have you fear? Will the verge of a tragic deed shake your resolution?

Second Murderer. More are we feared than fearing: all men are fearful of us, we fearless of all.

Queen. I have a thing to do and will pay well who does it well.

First Murderer. Though it be to strangle the sucking child at its mother's breast, and then to murder her who gave it nourishment, to us 'twould matter little, an gold were in good voice; for from the beginning of mankind until now, although it have no tongue, gold is the most eloquent of all orators.

Queen. Then hear me, men. Know you Somerset?

Second Murderer. We know no good of him.

Queen. He is a prisoner in the tower and sentenced to be beheaded one week to-day; but he must die this night. I desire it so, and who fulfills my desire shall reap rich reward.

First Murderer. He shall die, madam; the word reward sounds his doom.

Queen. [*Hands a paper*] Take this paper that you may be admitted to him. Here is my purse. Do all with despatch, and I will reline it at your will.

First Murderer. [*Looking at purse*] Herein is the weighty argument that will press the breath out of his body, making his tongue speechless, his ears deaf, and his eyes sightless.

Second Murderer. Though he now live, in us he is already dead. Let's haste. [*Exit Murderers.*]

Queen. And thus my plan for Edward goes so well.

That naught can fail it but defeat pell-mell;
While Bedford lives the king can hope in vain:
Defeat can only come when Bedford's slain.

SCENE VI. *A Room in the Tower.*

Enter SOMERSET and BELVILLE.

Somerset. Belville, there is a raven cloud of gloom.
Hangs over me to-night, as if some devil
Hover'd in the air.

Belville. Cheer up, my lord, the queen
Hath not forgot thee.

Somerset. Ah! she loves me, Belville.

Belville. Quite so, your grace.—Thou hast still seven days
To live, and, ere that hath expir'd, she will
Obtain thy pardon.—Come, the hour is late:
I prithee turn disquietude out of
Doors and embrace repose.

Somerset. [*Lies down*] I will to rest.
Give thee good-night.

Belville. Give thee good-night, my lord. [*Exit.*]

Somerset. I cannot shake this off; I cannot sleep;
A premonition of some ill exists.

Do I but close my eyes I see strange sights:
Of vultures flocking on the graveyard's tombs,
Of crows and ravens picking dead men's bones,
Of yawning graves, with hideous, grinning skulls,
Of ghastly murders; bloody spectacles.
With open eyes I see weird forms and shapes;
Each shadow is grotesquely magnified,
At which I shudder like a weak-nerv'd maid;
And, too, although there be no stirring sound,
Though not more silent is the buried corpse;
Methinks the doleful tongues of night din in
Mine ear: I hear the owl, the hoarse-voic'd frog——

[*Bell tolls.*]

O hark! What's that?—'Tis but the midnight toll.
Beshrew me; I did think it were my knell,
So mournfully did sound the deep-ton'd bell.

Enter MURDERERS.

What wintry faces are these, so full of frost,
So cold, so sullen, that their iciness
Hath frozen me?

First Murderer. We have come to cool the summer in
your blood, my lord.

Somerset. You say strangely. Who are you? Who sent
you here at this untimely hour?

Second Murderer. We are servants of the queen, and
come from her to you.

Somerset. The queen! O happy name! You are Decem-
ber's messengers, carrying June's message of love. You are
sent to free me?

First Murderer. Ay, my lord; to free you from the
world.

Somerset. From the world? What mean you by from?
Do not juggle with me; I am in no mettle for it.

First Murderer. My lord, the queen loves you.

Somerset. Dearly, dearly.

First Murderer. Marry! her love for you is so dear it
quite taxes the fund of her affection; wherefore, to lighten
the strain thereon, for that she fears her supply may be
exhausted, she is decided to rid herself of you, her chief
expense.

Second Murderer. Therein we, her grace's obedient sub-
jects, are come to——

Somerset. To what?

Second Murderer. To murder you, my lord.

Somerset. The queen to murder me! O give me proof
that she's in this!

First Murderer. [Shows him paper and purse] The
main proof will be in our blows; the indirect proofs lie
in this paper, signed by the queen, giving us access to
you; and in this golden purse, which commands our will,
our conscience and our arms.

Somerset. Subtle woman, thou hast played me false!—
But you will not murder me?

First Murderer. No, we will not; but our clubs will.
Down with him. [Striking him.]

Second Murderer. [*Striking*] 'Tis not we, but our master, gold, that strikes you thus.

[*Somerset falls. Exit Murderers.*]

Somerset. My heart is broken, e'en before these cruel
Blows beat the breath from me. Strike! Strike! Come,
death!

O woman, woman, who can fathom thee?

Read thou deceit and thou canst read a woman!

O God! receive my sinful soul.

[*Dies.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I. *The French Court.*

[*Flourish.*]

Enter KING, REGNAULT, LORDS *and* Attendants.

King. Twelve dozen moons have ebb'd and flow'd the
tides,
Twelve summers drunk the streams and brooklets dry,
Twelve winters spit their wrath of hail and snow,
Since that my child was stolen, my sweet bud,
That but four springs had blown their kisses on.
O dastard theft! Outrageous, heinous theft!
That shows all other thefts, all felonies,
As tiny pebbles to a giant rock.
O how my queen did mourn her daughter's loss!
Not wails and moans fill'd her, but silent grief,
The sharp-edg'd knife that cuts the heart in twain;
For she did borrow sorrow's eyes, which shed
Such tears that sorrow's tongue was drowned.
This heavy show'r droop'd her like to a tree
Bent down with rain, until proud grief bow'd her
So low she met the grave.—Still I do think
My floret lives.

Regnault. Your majesty, I fear
Not so; thy thought is hope. Methinks thy bud
And full-blown rose are one in heaven.

King. Why, hope is verdant ivy clinging to
The heart with tendrils indestructible.—
I feel my daughter is not dead. We must
Search more.

Regnault My liege, all could be done was done.
No secret spot throughout the realm but we
Did rake the very core of it.

King. 'Tis so;
And yet my lamp of hope, that burn'd so low,
Hath now been newly trimm'd.

Regnault. How so, my liege?

King. Regnault, for three nights past I've dreamt a
dream,

Regnault. Of her?

King. That she in London lives midst poverty;
In which her beauty shines as doth bright metal
Glisten'd by the sun.

Regnault. Didst tell old Astra this?

King. Yea, even so; here comes he now.

Enter ASTRA.

What, Astra, my good soothsayer, dost bring
The answer to my dream?

Astra. Most mighty sovereign,
Hear Astra speak. All night I read the stars:
I will be brief: thy dream is as it is.
Send thine ambassador to London now,
And he will smooth the wrinkles from thy brow.

King. As if to prove her child of France, thou know'st
A mole of nature mark'd a fleur-de-lis—

Regnault. Upon her arm; oft spake my wife of it.

King. Go thou unto the English court. There tell
The king of this; and with his aid seek well.

Regnault. Dark secrecy will I turn inside out,
And sieve the ashy night of hidden things
Into a noon of light.

King. Make haste! Speed, speed!
Some fairy spirit dances joy in me;
The joy that's felt in sweet expectancy.

[Exit, with flourish.]

SCENE II.

LONDON.—*A Room of State in the Palace.*

[*Flourish.*]

Enter KING, QUEEN, YORK, LORDS and Attendants.

King. What heavy cares encircle this my crown
The times attest. Deep gloom, with visage dark,
Hides from desiring view the sun of joy.
Now brooding melancholy spreads like fire,
And discontent snarls like an angry dog;
Sweet, gentle peace bows low her head in grief,
Hiding in secret caves to wail and mourn.
Now revelry and feasts are not in vogue;
The wardrobes, stuff'd with costly silk and lace,
Doff'd quickly there, to put on warlike mail,
Have need no more of tailors' gracing skill.
In grim despair, the tradesmen shut their shops,
The factories and mills are still'd like death,
Save where the arm'ers anvils loudly ring:
Bustling activity is there the scene;
High jump the merry flames, while shooting sparks
Fly from the white-heat iron, in haste to 'scape
From murd'rous weapons, soon to clip life's cord.
Our ground is saturate with English blood,
That, mingling with our women's piteous tears,
Showering earth's bosom like a gentle rain,
Pollutes the springs and stains our noble streams.
Stamp'd out by neighing steeds and marching troops,
Fair plants rot at the seed, decline, and die,
Whilst baneful weeds abound like ocean's waste.
Music hath lost the name of melody:
Shrill-sounding drums and bugles' blasting notes
Bestill the dulcet strains of daintier sounds,
And, rusty with disuse, gay instruments
Await the advent of more joyous times.
All sweet-voic'd birds have wing'd to peaceful climes,
But vultures flock in numbers past man's count,

Ill-omen'd ravens croak, and all is gloom.
So, day is tedious as a much-told tale,
And night is dismal more by screech-owls' hoots.
As pestilential plague infected us,
From shore to shore we seem accurst of God.
All's weary, stale, and fraught with heavy woe.
What cares rest on my crown but kings do know;
Unhappy king, that reigns in time of war;
Would I were not the king till war were o'er.

York. My gracious majesty, I do beseech thee,
Bear not so hard what, in his wisdom, God
Hath seen fit to afflict our country with.
My liege, no more is it within our power,
Though we be counsel to the wisest wise, `
To grasp the scope and workings of His will,
Than children, playing on the shore of time,
Can read the volume of eternity,
Whose countless pages dwarf the forests' leaves.
In sooth, this is a devastating war,
Which thou, in words, hast made a picture of,
And painted with such sombre tints and hues,
In shades of direst gloom and gnarling woe,
Would night a day, or out-grieve drooping grief;
But such the state of kings: and this cruel strife,
This civil broil, this family dispute,
This quarr'l of kin, this battling house 'gainst house,
With brothers sprinkling dust with brothers' blood,
With fathers murdering sons, sons fathers,
Is not the first fair England's been at odds
To crack the tender soil of smiling peace.
Ere now our kings have seen barbarity;
And, while black malice sits in hearts of men,
Like serpent basking 'neath a fragrant flower,
And grasping envy sours kind, sweet content,
So long will wars and treachery abide,
So long will traitors plot for kingly thrones,
And sting the bosoms where they nestled on.
'Tis meet we rouse with courage fresh inspired,
For God is just and cares for righteous kings.
Kings are his own, and by him kings are crowned;
Up, up, our king, for traitors will go down.

Queen. How well white hairs become sweet wisdom's words.

King. Yea, Blanch, York ne'er doth ope his golden mouth,
But he doth breathe a string of pearly truths.

Queen. Why, quite a jest is this:
A golden mouth, a head of silver hair,
A string of pearls: doth make a jew'l most rare.

York. Your highness is in merry mood. This time
Is much too serious for such silly rhyme.

Queen. A plated jewel that's worn to its base
Is out of use; so thou art out of place.

King. Is there perversion in the air, that tips
Thy speech against my faithful York? I ne'er
Have heard thee thus.

York. A woman's fitful mind.

Queen. A woman's fitful mind! A queen's prerogative
To speak when that her lord's outlorded by
Such supercilious airs as thine. Art thou
The king? Well may'st thou be since thou dost not
Advise, but rule. Thou art the king in fact,
If not in name. The hinges of thy knees
Are stiff for want of royal courtesy.
Thy insolence hath ruffled me——

King. Sweet love——

Queen. Sweet me no sweets, nor love me no loves.
Thou art a plaything in the hands of York,
And I, thy queen, am subject to his gibes.

King. What blew this tempest up?

Queen. Not sudden winds;
A many clouds of slights, his arrogance,
And hatred for our Edward, our dear son.

York. [*Aside*] Whom I do hate as I do hate deceit,
And cowardly curs.

King. O tut, tut, go to; [*To the Queen.*]
These troublous days have made thee peevish as
Themselves.

Queen. Tut, tut, go to; these troublous days
[*To the King.*]

Have made thee dull as they.

York. Peace, all, I pray.

Queen. Hear now! Peace all! Whom dost thou so command?

Peace, king! peace, queen! submit thyself to York!
Why thou hast filch'd authority's voice,
And wouldst usurp his garment. Somerset,
Trait'r though he were, had been a courtier
Where thou art but a boor.

York. Madam, thy tongue's
Sharp lance falls hurtless 'gainst mine armor of
Integrity.—My liege, the queen did speak
Of Somerset: hast thou e'er thought who caused
His murder in the tower?

Queen. [*Aside*] What means old York?
His piercing eye probes deep into my soul.

King. I never ponder'd on the traitor's death.

York. Madam, hast thou?

Queen. Too deep a mystery
For me, my lord.

York. Deep mysteries to some
Are oft to others clear as crystal brooks.

Queen. [*Aside*] I like this not. I fear he doth suspect.—
Why dost thou ask this thing? [*To York.*]

York. Mere curiosity.
I had a fancy in my mind—but let
That pass.—How now, my lady? Art thou ill
That all thy scarlet's fled, and left thy face
A milky rose?

Queen. [*Aside*] Accursed tell-tale cheek,
I feel the color scatter from its native
Residence.

Enter MESSENGER.

O sweet relief! here's one
To turn his gaze from me.

King. What tidings, man?

Messenger. My liege, of a great battle.
Thy troops are mass'd entire against the foe;
Whose numbers so outnumber them as do
The sparrows eagles.

King. 'Tis the final gasp;
This strife will drop the life of royalty

Into the rotten mouth of death, or, like
 A man that's fought dire fever back, upon
 Recovery is the stronger than before
 Attack'd, so majesty, if victory
 Do sit with us, will from this bed of ills
 Arise with greater power.—What hope against
 Such whelming odds? How do our soldiers?

Messenger. Despair's black curtain veils them in deep
 night.

As watchers by the sick, hope being gone,
 Await with patience grim the soul's swift flight,
 Even so do they now calmly wait defeat

York. Hope is a fire that burns in every breast;
 Whose spark is lasting as the spark of life.
 Now He whose breath doth bow the sturdy oak
 Will blow despair from out its tatter'd rags,
 Which wind shall fan hope's spark into a flame;
 Then, eagle-like, our scanty band shall rout
 The rebels' sparrow hordes as doth the king
 Of birds his multitudinous foes.

King. I'll put my trust in thee, thou mighty God.

Enter ANOTHER MESSENGER.

Messenger. My lord, when I did leave the battle scene,
 The armies were contending as the wind
 And sea at tempest's height

King. What vantage?

Messenger. Slightly with us; the prospect victory.
 For thus it stood: the many, being
 Too many, chok'd their efforts, and did cumber
 Themselves, whilst we, the few, were mighty in
 Our several valors.—Bedford's death——

Queen. What, Bedford dead?

Messenger. Ay, madam, slain by
 The prince.

King. My noble son!

Queen. [*Aside*] Thy cursed son!
 Beshrew the day that fortune favor'd him

York. Why, 'tis most welcome news. The mainmast
 down,

With all its shrouds and tackles tangled up,
With broken spars and sails all torn by
The fall, will harass so the rebel bark
That she shall be an easy prey.

Messenger. And so
I do believe that he who follows in
My steps shall bring full news of victory.

Queen. [*Aside*] Blister the tongue of him that brings
such news!

King. This is well told, but only partly told,
And, like a man on edge to know the climax
O' a tragedy, I wait in anxious pause
To dive into the bottom of despair,
Or, mounting swallow's wings, soar to the top
Of lofty joy.

Enter ASHLAND.

Ashland. O soar with eagle's wings!

King. Yea, this man's face fortells some cheering tale;
So looks the sun as't peeps between two clouds,
Hanging like sable drapery in the sky.

Ashland. Rebellion's throat is cut, and he is dead!

King. My army wins?

Ashland. As chaff before a gale
The rebels flew. Their arms are ours, their lives
At thy command, their leaders dead, their——

King. O this is harp, and flute, and violin!
Why, man, thou art musician peer of all!
Play on this tune and I will make thee great.

York. Wert thou more ugly than the loathed toad,
Now in our sight the fairest is less fair,
Hearing this happy message from thy lips.

Queen. [*Aside*] Wert thou more handsome than the
Grecian god,
Now in my sight the ugliest is more fair,
Hearing this cursed message from thy lips.

Ashland. Two days the battle rag'd. The first day's
fight.
Was carving courage from our loyal hearts,
For sword and shot thinn'd out our meagre ranks,
As doth a sickle mow the August wheat;

When, as the sun did die his daily death,
And western skies in garish hues lit up
The grandeur of the parting day, why lo!
Like prairie fires speed through the wither'd grass,
A shout ran through our troops of Richard's deed:
How he had lopp'd the rebel leader's head.
O then behold fresh inspiration grow!
O then list to the deafening plaudits for
The prince!

King. Sweet warrior son! Oak midst pines!
Why, heaven's raining mercies on our heads.

York. So joys, like sorrows, come in flocking troops.

Ashland. And then that night behold this young god
Mars:

As he doth go from tent to tent, see him
Take by the hand his soldier-friends, and pat
Them on the back, and speak familiarly:
"Why, Joe! Good Jack! How fare you, Tom? What! Bill,
Again in arms after such bruising wounds?"
And those he doth not know calls brother;
Whispering to all their souls encouragement,
Whilst they for love of him would stake their lives.
Then doth he form the soldiers in a mass,
And speaks to them collectively; yea, speaks
In such a mighty voice there's nothing lives
'Twixt it and thunder. O, see them thrilled!
His fiery speech melts all the dross from them,
And they, new-made and purified, yearn for
The sun, which, when it rose, set not until
The traitors bow'd submission to our arms.

King. No sweeter music have I ever heard.
The lark's rich voice, that doth announce the morn
With matins of most dulcet melody,
Is but a raven's harshest croak to thine,
And sirens' softest strains had been a discord
Unto the song that thou hast sung to me;
For thou hast sung my kingdom back again,
Hast chanted Richard's deeds in highest key
And drown'd our sorrows in a sea of joy;
For this I love thee as a brother.

Queen. You sing of Richard's praise: what of my son?

Messenger. Your highness, truth will out: a needle's point
Is not so small as is thy Edward's valor.

King. Why say you so of Edward, our young son?

Messenger. My liege, the sky is not more distant from
The earth than is the difference twixt thy sons:
Richard is nature's nobleman, a tree
That towers above the forests of men;
Edward's a coward, if not a traitor.

Queen. [*Aside*] Why, Edward could not fight against
himself,

And so he doth appear in cowardly dress;

But I must play mine anger genuine.—

This is a poison'd shaft of envy's tongue, [*To messenger.*]

This is an arrow shot from slander's mouth!

Base man, do not you know that in this world,

He that's an eagle midst the flocking daws,

A lion 'mongst a pack of whining wolves,

A leader in a band of cringing men,

Stands ever target to be most assailed?

The tallest timber is the most attacked

By heaven's winds and tempests' bending gusts,

The fairest flower is aptest to be plucked,

And choicest fruit is sought for by the worm.

So he, my glorious son, my sun of sons,

Is thus defil'd by base, ignoble men;

Whose lying tongues full soon will lie in death,

Where lies forever lie, hush'd in the tomb;

When, like the sun, my noble son will shine,

And make all other men but shadows in

His light.

[*Exit.*]

York. The queen is much displeas'd, my lord.

King. We will not mar the summer of our joy
By her slight autumn frost of discontent.

Enter REGNAULT.

York. The French ambassador is come.

King. Well, France,
What wouldst of us?

Regnault. Great England's majesty,
The king of France, my liege, greets you as brother;
And, after greeting, bids that I request
Thy gracious aid in search of his lost daughter,
Stolen twelve years ago; who now, by dreams,
And prophet's study of the stars, is shown
To be in London.

King. Welcome, France! Thy wish
Shall be our thought. So warm a friendship show,
My lords, that France shall burn with love for us.

Regnault. All health and thanks to thee, kind sovereign.
[*Exit.*]

King. O God is great, and just, and merciful!
Our clouds have broke, and naught but blessings fell.
Of trouble no man speak: be merry, lords!
Go ring the bells, beat drums, and cymbals clang!
Let cannons' booming throats vociferate
That joy is king, by Richard newly crowned.—
Make ready for our victors such a feast
As never hath been seen by man or beast.
Go now; make preparations for festivity.

[*Exit, with flourish.*]

SCENE III. *Banquet and Dance Hall in the Palace.*

Enter SERVINGMEN.

First Servant. Thou great, fat dumpling; thou biped elephant; thou drone of laziness, move lively there; hurry, thou!

Second Servant. Patience, man, patience; heat not yourself to such high pitch; hurry begets speed, speed begets haste, and haste breaks its own neck. Marry! I will not be the father of murder; therefore I will not haste.

First Servant. Why, thou lubberly hill of idleness, thou snail of movement, thou saucy in speech, did not I have need of thee I would break thine own neck, and dangle thee from yon wall.

Second Servant. Which is the more proof that need is a great master, who hereby is surety for my neck. Marry!

need sharpens the wit, moves the muscle, swiftens the slow, teaches the ignorant, increases the wisdom of the wise, makes thoughtful the foolish, and enlivens the idle.

First Servant. Yet neither need nor needless can increase thy pace a tittle.

Second Servant. Wherein need is shown to possess the beauty of consistency: it cannot make the ass roar, the lion bray, the bull bleat, the sheep bellow, the dog mew, the cat bark, or my slow legs to go quickly. Nature builds all things to its special purpose, which she doth not pervert: the hippopotamus was not made to race, nor I to hurry.

First Servant. Why, you waddling mass of lard, thou art more lazy than fat, more fat than wise. Methinks, a branding-iron, well-heated, applied to thy corpulence, would hasten thee.

Second Servant. Truly, truly; for the excessive heat melting mine obesity, would render me lean, and leanness is conducive to speed; but much more so a flask of sack to tempt my nose forward.—Who's here?

[*Enter another servant.*]

Third Servant. O such a blaze of beauty as I have seen!

First Servant. Where?

Third Servant. Outside; waiting for the festivities to begin.

First Servant. The court-ladies?

Third Servant. No, no; a galaxy of waiting maids—shining crystals which, to grace the occasion, the king hath selected from the beauties of all London, whose degree permits them to act as menials.

Second Servant. This will lighten our burdens?

Third Servant. Ay, they wait in our places.

Second Servant. O beauty, I adore thee for that thou depriv'st me of labor, and driv'st me to sack; sack, I love thee, for that thou send'st me to sleep, which is ever sweet to the innocent, the just, and——

First Servant. The lazy!—Thou lumbering bark of iniquity, avaunt!

Go; gulp thy sack till thou art deaf and blind. [*Music.*] Hark! there's music!—They come.

Second Servant. Why is victory ever clamorous and musical; defeat silent?

Third Servant. I know not; why is it?

Second Servant. Victory is joy; joy plays upon the soul; the soul moves the tongue to rejoice, and the soul and music being an affinity, the soul desires music which responds in glad acclaim: defeat is humiliation, and humiliation is tongue-tied.

Third Servant. Then is the queen defeated, for she rejoices not, and sounding brass and tinkling cymbals she does not relish.

First Servant. Look where they come. Haste away. Move on, thou great mountain of nothing. [Exit.]

Enter KING, QUEEN, YORK, LORDS, LADIES *and* Attendants,
with music.

King. This is a happy time for me. Good York,
My soul is light as is the foamy crest
Of ocean's billows.

Queen. Likewise thy stability:
Thou art a billow in thy rise and fall,
An April day of momentary tears
And smiles. A king? Why, thou art fickle as
The herd.

King. Man is but man, though he be king;
Storms droop great trees as well as lesser plants,
So kings, like private men, are bow'd by trials.

Queen. Yet kings should rise by trials where privates fall.

King. The tree returns to native height when that
The storm is spent; so, even I, care gone,
Do rise with joy; for joy is ever lofty
And flies its owner high. Look in mine eyes—
Dost thou not see joy's image there? My face—
Is it not radiant with happiness?

And why, sweet Blanch, dost thou not joy with me?

Queen. I do not hang my heart out as a sign,
Nor is my temperature so fitful to
Each veering gust as thine. Thou now art smiles,
But yet awhile thou wilt again be tears.

York. Why, such is life; change forms our journey from
The cradle to the grave, which change is but

The alternation of our joys and sorrows;
For life is but a painted picture,
On which the Master-Artist, God, hath touched
In equal parts so many shades and lights,
That bear their due proportion to each other:
Or 'tis a circle; birth and death do meet;
For, as a runner on an oval track
Hath for his goal the point from which he starts,
So, in life's race we end where we begin:
Of dust begot, to dust we do return;
And, first a child, we round the stage of man,
To only act again the part once played,
As second childishness, with jabbering speech,
With toothless head, and feeble, tottering limbs,
Doth duplicate the first. O foolish man!
Why art thou proud? With naught thou cam'st to life,
With naught depart'st. Death leveleth all things:
Riches have but a temporal power,
And glory's but a dream, a colored toy,
As fragile as a bubble in the air;
The king, the subject, and the rich and poor.
The prince, with velvet dress and golden lace,
The palsied beggar at the palace door,
The merchant, counting heaps of treasured gold,
Or he that owneth not a single groat,
Shall frigid death mold to an equal caste.
Content and comfort man will never have,
For, like a child that cries for playthings new,
He ever longs for what he doth not have,
And, having, tires and frets and longs for more.
The devil laughs for that frail man is vain:
There is no independence in this world,
And why should servile creatures strut with pride?
Great greatness doth depend upon the low,
The mightiest owe their comforts to the least:
Great king, doth not the ox and field feed thee?
Proud man, thy stately robes are from the sheep;
Vain woman, to the worm thou ow'st thy silks,
And for thy furs look to the forests' beasts.

[Ordinance sounds and trumpets blare without.]

King. The booming guns and trumpets' blare announce
Approach of those we wait. Rejoice we all.
Sweet music is a sauce to victory.
Let the musicans play victorious lays.

Music. Enter RICHARD, EDWARD, WARWICK, BUCKINGHAM
and Attendants.

Richard. All hail to thee, my liege and gracious father!

Warwick. My loving sovereign, peace and joy be thine.

Buckingham. May each day double in its happiness,
Until immortal crown doth round thy brow.

Edward. [*Aside to Queen*] Mother, I have no heart to
say these things.

Queen. [*Aside to Edward*] Be chary, son; show not
discomfort now,
Nor let thy face be mirror to thy thoughts.

King. Welcome to all! Thou rugged oak, Warwick,
I love thee. Buckingham, the fresh pluck'd flower
Is not so sweet to me as thou. Of thee,
Richard, so proud I am my humble tongue
Hath not the power to sing thy praise. Edward,
I greet thee.

Queen. [*Aside*] Cool to Edward! Memory,
Remember!

King. With every joy there is a sorrow mixed:
We mourn thee, Salisbury.—A silent toast
To him, our loyal knight, whose silver tongue
Is muffled in the smothering earth. [*All toast.*]

Richard. [*To his man Gilbert*] Why do they burn the
lights and tapers so?

Gilbert. My lord, 'tis dark; the day hath long sunk low.

Richard. [*Points to a maid*] What! night? Not so:
there shines the dazzling sun;
'Tis daylight still; the night hath not begun.
Who is yon lady fair?

Gilbert. I do not know.

Richard. Go find you out.

Gilbert. [*Leaving*] My lord loves with his eye,
Which loves are sudden and most sudden die.

Richard. Such beauty I have never look'd upon;
My heart is lost and from my bosom gone.
Celestial sight, that so doth hold mine eye,
I see but thee, though many be near by.
O see her as she speaks to Gilbert now!
Her grace doth show each lady here a cow.

Gilbert. [*To Richard*] My lord, she is a waiting-maid.

Richard. A maid?

Why, she's the queen of maids; a maidenly queen!
Gilbert, hast thou such beauty ever seen?

Gilbert. If she be good as fair, she is most fair.

Richard. A waiting-maid and I a prince! O love,
What kind of god art thou that level'st so?
Thou bring'st the great to stoop unto the low.

Gilbert. You're all a-tremble, sir.

Richard. My stirring soul!

Shall I believe love is a hideous monster?
Yet, why doth love so tremble one with fear?

Gilbert. She crimsons 'neath your gaze.

Richard. [*Points to drooping red roses by her*] Which
shames the flowers!

O how the full-blown rose doth droop its head,
And dainty buds, just breathing life, fall dead!
For what? Look now upon her blooming cheek;
There see the blush the other roses seek!

King. Now let there be a march. Our son shall lead;
And lords, you know your own degrees; so follow.
Come, Richard, choose your mate.

Richard. [*To the maid*] What is thy name?

Aline. Aline, my lord.

Richard. So sweet a name well fits
So sweet a face. Aline, wilt march with me?

Aline. O, sir, it cannot be.

Richard. And why, I pray?

Aline. Thou art a prince, and I a waiting-maid.

Richard. God is o'er all, and we are one to Him.

Aline. This earth views not as heaven doth, my lord.

Richard. As those in heaven have but heavenly views,
Then earth and Richard shall not view alike,
For I do think me in that realm of bliss,
And thou a seraph there.

Aline. [*Aside*] Love is so sweet
That I am captur'd by his honey words;
It is so swift I am o'ertook ere that
I am pursued.—But list! what says the king?

King. Richard, hast chosen yet?

Richard. [*Advancing with Aline*] My liege, I have;
Is she not fair?

King. Most fair, most wondrous fair!

Queen. Most wondrous fair! Most wondrous insult this!
Shall Richard mock and ridicule our court?

King. Why, Blanch, what fies you so?

Queen. Those glowing coals,
That purifies from dross. We're tainted now.
It is a pretty pass when that thy son,
Slighting our royal blood, selects a servant
Above our noble ladies here!

King. A servant?

Queen. One of your novelties. This maid is from
The slums; of coarse and vulgar birth.

Edward. A bawd!

A wanton, I dare say.

Richard. Have care; and dare
Not say again! Upon her virtue I
Would pawn my life, and place mine honor she
Is honorable!

Aline. O, prithee, let me go.

Richard. Fear not, Aline, I'll see it to the end.

Aline. For worlds I would not be the cause of this.

King. She is so sweet and lovely I'm quite caged,
And stand in pause how I shall act. Speak, Warwick;
Shall Richard lead the march with her?

Warwick. Ask not

The mason how to sew, the tailor how
To build. I have a soldier's eye for beauty,
But am no ladies' man: more of the camp
I smack than etiquette.

King. And Buckingham?

Buckingham. 'Tis true it is a breach of custom which
Doth have no precedent.

Richard. Sweet Buckingham,
Princes make customs; do not follow them.

Richard will stand for this: that beauty when
To virtue bound shall outrank rank. So then
Let's to an end and start the gayety.

King. Nay; list to York.

York. A trivial matter, sir;
A fancy of the prince, a whim of youth.

Queen. All fools' replies! Is this a royal court,
Or are we chang'd into a bawdy-house?
Shall London mix its dregs with azure blood?
This strumpet, this bold, brazen drab——

Richard. Enough!
Madam, you speak her false, and wrong your sex.
Forsooth, she is of lowly birth, and poor;
What then? Poverty's not dishonor's badge;
'Neath ragged gowns beat many hearts of gold,
With lowliest births oft greatest glories blend.
Rank and degree cannot a lady make:
'Tis not the raiment that a woman wears—
The satin, and the silk, the gorgeous jewels,
The coat of arms that marks a family pride,
The title that doth bow the cringing knee,
No, nor the pomp of majesty—not these
Denote her truly. These but do allure,
And oft do gloss base metal as the pure.

Queen. You talk more like a silly chit than prince.
No art of man can change the brass to gold,
Nor gold to brass; so 'tis with blood. Sin and
Nobility are common enemies;
There is no vileness in your royalty——

[*Enter Somerset's ghost. The queen greatly startled.*]

Richard. What ails your highness that you do so start?

Queen. Take it away! Away! Away! Begone!

King. Why, Blanch, what dost thou see?

Edward. Sweet mother,
O look not there with such a vacant stare;
So shows the eyeballs of the sightless dead,
As thine are now with terror fix'd.

Queen. Avaunt,
Thou horrid sight! Back to thy yawning grave!

King. Anger hath fever'd her brain and made her thus.

Queen. [*Pointing to ghost*] Dost thou not see yon dreadful thing?

King. What thing?

Queen. The ghost of Somerset! Look how he stalks, Like when in life his mien was so majestic!

King. Where! Where?

Queen. There! Here! 'Tis gone! O——

[*Queen faints and falls. Ghost vanishes.*]

King. She is most ill. Lead her without, and we Will follow, too; cease all festivity.

York. Thus conscience so did fright her sinful soul, It show'd this picture that doth tell the whole.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *A Garden to Constance's House.*

Enter CONSTANCE and ALINE.

Aline. How long didst say?

Constance. Why, let me see; ten years——

Aline. O not so long.

Constance. Ay, more than that: twelve years This coming month; yes, twelve since we left France.

Aline. Dear me! How time doth fly! I hardly thought So many years had gone.

Constance. So many years?
O creeping time's so constant that 'tis swift,
Increasing in its pace each going year;
When winter frosts these golden locks of thine,
That now are shining in thy spring of youth,
'Twill be a race-horse straining toward the goal.

Aline. I love sweet, sunny France.

Constance. Thou lovest France?
Why, what remembrance dost thou have of France?

Aline. I now am sixteen, thou dost say?

Constance. Past May
Did make thee so.

Aline. Then I was four years old
When came we here; a little child, a babe?

Constance. The prettiest babe that ever cradle rocked;
Thine eyes, so blue, are but reflections of
Fair France's violet skies, these tresses robbed
Its sunbeams of their sheen.

Aline. 'Tis strange.

Constance. What say'st?

Aline. Methinks 'tis strange.

Constance. What's strange, my child?

Aline. O strange

The memories I have of France.

Constance. Tush, tush!

Thou wast too young for memory's root to plant.

Aline. Yet I do sit the livelong day, and see
Its fields, its skies, its vineyards, and its flowers;
I smell the fragrance sweet that's wafted on
Its balmy winds, and hear the melody
Of song-birds in the trees.

Constance. 'Tis fancy's thoughts,
For thou wast much too young, too young, Aline;
Remembrance clings not to such infant shoot.

Aline. But more than that: oft when I wander far,
My mind deep in some hazy fog of thought,
Streaming upon me like a flash of light,
Sensations come remotely of the past;
Of marble halls, of palaces, and courts,
Of velvet robes, silk gowns, and royalty,
I, in their midst, much petted and admired,
As if I were the daughter of a king.
And, too, I dream of this.

Constance. 'Tis foolish, child;
Stray not so far from home; nor fly so high
Above our humble station. Content is wealth,
Without which there's nor happiness nor health.

Aline. O 'tis not that I yearn for these great things,
Or that I give mine idle moments to
Sore discontent. I love thee, mother dear;
There is no measure that can measure it,
For thou hast ever loving been and kind:
I am content. But no more can I stay
The channel of my thought from emptying in
Great majesty than rivers can restrain
Their progress to the sea.

Constance. [*Aside*] O nature, thou
Dost have a various seed for each thy plants;
And so with our humanity. Dies not
The noble germ in this most noble stock.
Did she but know how near her thoughts do touch
Her birth!—Aline! Go! bring thy harp; we'll play.
Methinks Prince Richard hath thus turn'd thy head.

Aline. Ah me! the prince. [*Exit.*]

Constance. The daughter of a king! Why, so she is!
O, Athos, my dear husband, long time dead,
Thy secret I have kept: she's still unknown;
Discovery's eyes are ag'd and blind by time.
When thou didst France offend: was punished,
Imprison'd, scourged, thou didst swear revenge:
Stole from the king this girl when but a babe
In swaddling clothes; evaded search; then fled
To England, where thou died'st, thus leaving me
To rear her, whom we call'd Aline, as best
My means afford. I've taught her, schooled her,
Until her mind is like fine, polish'd gold,
Unset with jewels; simple, but rich.
Little she knows her birth; thinks I'm her mother.
Well, though I were I could not love her more,
For she hath tied herself unto my heart.
Fain would I tell her all: that these, her dreams,
Her fancies, are indeed truths knocking for
Admission at the door belief; but that
The dread of death, and fear of losing her
Doth muzzle me.—But, soft! hither she comes.

Enter ALINE.

I'll go and get my music, dear. [*Exit.*]

*Enter RICHARD unobserved; who, in turn, is screened from
seeing Aline by a bush, &c.*

Aline. Ah me! I have not seen him since that night.

Richard. Ah me! the banquet was a happy time,
For then it was I first met her and loved.

Aline. Alas! it was too sweet for this sour world.

**Richard.* Alas! alas! I have not seen her since.

Aline. I wonder if he e'er doth think of me?

Richard. I have no thoughts but what are e'er of her.

Aline. Time, tide, night, day, 'tis ever of my love.

Richard. Morn, eve, light, dark, awake, asleep, on thee,
O, sweet Aline, my mind incessant rests.

Aline. The verdant ivy clings tenaciously
Unto its clasp; but not so firm as doth
My thought to him, the noblest prince e'er lived.

Richard. As beats the constant sea against the shore,
No interval, no rest, no lull, no cease;
So beats my heart with love for thee, Aline.

Aline. O what a nobleness sat on his brow,
What manly fire flash'd in his youthful eye,
As he defended womanhood and me
From base scurrility.

Richard. What beauty lit
Her face, majestic, calm, serene—such peace
And quiet as the setting sun sheds forth
In mellow loveliness—as radiant
She stood, an angel, while the queen—less queen
Than she—defam'd her: frowning not, but at
Her vilifier looking aught but sweet
Forgiveness.

Aline. What great lies I've heard of courts,
Of lords and noblemen: their pompous ways,
Disdainful pride and haughtiness, or yet,
Their coxcombry and fusty etiquette,
With mincing speech, and dainty and perfumed,
Replete in soft effeminateness, whereby
Their lack of manliness is manifest.
Well, well, this is a world to live and learn:
If he be not nobility itself,
There is no nobleness

Richard. How have I been
Deceiv'd about the people 'neath high rank:
The commons, I've been told, are coarse and low,
The women vulgar and unmannerly.
O slanderous court! how she hath shatter'd this!
A woman's crown is not a golden circle:
Virtue, mild patience, charity—why, these

Outvalue all the glistening shows of pomp.
Outside of palaces live many queens;
Riches and rank are sin's securest screens.

Aline. O how his manly beauty and true worth
Hath captured me.

Richard. Her queenly dignity
Div'd deep into the waters of my soul;
Thence rose with me a captive to her charms.

Aline. Would that I were a beauteous princess born,
That he might deign to proffer love to me.

Richard. Had I but been of humble parentage,
And she my father's neighbor's child, O joy,
I'd pour my love into her ear throughout,
The livelong day.

Aline. Ah me! it is so hard
When women have a tongue but cannot speak
Their love.

Richard. Ah me! this cursed royalty
Hath made me mute, or like the lark I'd sing
My love to her.

Aline. To be his love—O bliss!
I fear me that 'tis wrong to yearn for things
Impossible—but yet to be his love
I'd wish I were a beauteous queen, or wealth,
Great wealth, were mine, if that would win his love.

Richard. O happiness supreme! to have her love,
I'd rather be an honest, drudging slave,
And callous these, my hands, with labor's task;
Than wear a kingly face of feigned joy,
With aching heart within.

Aline. O I do pray
That I shall see him soon.

Richard. O I shall see
Her now; this is her home that I have tried [*Walks about.*]
These many days to find.—What, ho! 'tis her! [*Sees Aline.*]
My love! my soul! my sweet Aline.

Aline. Thy love?
'Tis I, Aline; but didst thou say thy love?
O say again! Yet say not so if thou
Dost say in jest.

Richard. Unjust to say I jest:
I swear by all the sacredness of truth,
I love.

Aline. Thou lov'st me, prince? An humble girl?

Richard. Yon moon beams not upon so true a love,
As't shines on lovers through the stilly night.

Aline. Yon moon? Alas! the moon doth wax and wane,
And so, if thou dost love, perchance thy love
Will emulate it thus.

Richard. 'Twill never wane;
But, like the moon, will wax, growing apace,
Till, were't the moon, 'twould fill the heaven's space,
Spreading such glorious, shining silver light,
That day would not be brighter than the night.

Aline. But then, perhaps, as is the changing orb,
Thy love in halves and quarters small would be
Divided in thy varying moods for me.

Richard. Above, look at the silver sphere complete:
'Tis full; so is my heart with love replete.
O no division e'er will lessen it,
For thou art queen; upon this throne doth sit.

[*Touches his heart.*]

Aline. Then thou dost love me truly, noble prince?

Richard. I lov'd thee at first sight; have lov'd thee since.
There is no bound, no limit to my love,
Which is as pure in thought as snow-white dove:
Thy beauty's lance hath pierc'd my bleeding heart,
Till life is death when I'm from thee apart;
For beauty is a rose with sharpest thorn,
That sorely wounds the love that's held in scorn.
So what I give to thee I beg return:
My heart's afire; with love for thee doth burn.
The sea is not so deep, the sky so high,
As is my love from now until I die.

Aline. O sweetest honey words from sugar tongue.

Richard. O say that what I say is sweet to thee,
I'll tell thee of my love eternally.

Aline. And I, to hear thee tell, will list until
Time stops mine ear; death makes my senses still.
Love's story e'er is young, doth not grow old;
Each time repeated seems the sweeter told.

Richard. Dost thou love me?

Aline. Thou art my gaoler, prince,
That hath immesh'd me in the web of love;
From which I ne'er would break one thread to 'scape,
So dear is my imprisonment

Richard. So dear?
How that one word doth fill me full of cheer!
Now, sweet, I'll be the bee to suck the bliss
That lies within the magic of a kiss. [*Kisses her.*]
This is the wax, our pledge of love to seal.

Aline. But wax is bitter; this cannot be real.

Richard. One touch of wax holds not secure and fast.

Aline. Nor yet one kiss.

Richard. Ten thousand be our last.
[*Kisses again.*]

Aline. The last is sweetest.

Richard. Then begin once more;
For each beginning hath its final score. [*Kisses again.*]

Aline. How didst thou find my home?

Richard. Upon the wings
Of love I came; and what can love not find?
Did mountains top thee with their mass of earth,
If thou wert one of ocean's countless drops,
A sand upon its shore; or didst thou on
Great Afric's desert wander desolate,
I'd seek thee out; for there's no stay to love.

Aline. What will the king?

Richard. Thou spectre royalty,
Proud pomp, the sun of love did glare mine eyes, [*Aside.*]
Hiding thee momentarily. The king
Will rough and bramble our smooth path.—Consider
[*To Aline.*]

It not; be happy. But I must now leave
Thee, sweet, to come again so soon as I
Can break me from the court.

Aline. Must thou depart?
O stay awhile! Yet stay till morn did break,
And thou hadst been but one sweet second here,
So swift doth love make time. O hold, I pray.

Richard. When love's with love, the hours as minutes go;
But love from love, time's pace is snailish slow.

Aline. When shall I see thee next?

Richard. To-morrow, dear.

Aline. What time?

Richard. Near noon.

Aline. A century to pass!

And I, gray-hair'd and wrinkled, not a lass,

If that it be so long as long 'twill seem.

Richard. One kiss, now, love, before I parting give;

No more on earth, in heaven do I live.

Good-night, good-night! Adieu! adieu! my sweet;

Comfort and peace be thine until we meet.

SCENE II. *A Room in the Palàce.*

Enter YORK.

York. I have not liv'd these many seasons of

These many years to be unseasoned.

Rain, sun, snow, hail, warmth, cold, have wintered

And summered me in nature and with man.

Within this rimy-covered skull hath time

And care some germs of wisdom thrived,

And I do know the workings of the heart

Are not less changing than the seasons are.

Oft have I seen an humble lord, kiss'd by

The fragrant springtime breath of favor,

Blossom into a summer rose of beauty;

Then came the autumn frost of testiness,

Falling his leaves of glory, and then, last,

The winter of the kingly wrath did root

The very seed of glory from its bed.

Thus ever is the heart of fitful mood,

Yet ever there's a purpose for each mood,

And ever there's a cause for every purpose.—

Consid'r it well: why did she murder him?

That she did murder him all goes to show:

Conscience wrote terror on her face; her soul,

Her wicked soul, reflected to her eyes

The image of her deed; she spake her crime

When cried she, "Ghost of Somerset!" which we

Saw not.—But wherefore did she murder him?
Consider this: the purpose of her deed.

A traitor sentenced unto death, why should——

Aha! I have it now! A light breaks in:

The queen loves not the king; to seat her son

Upon the throne, she leagued with Somerset;

Discover'd as he was, she had him killed,

Fearing he would expose her, too. What then?

This act is but the prelude to her play,

And I must watch for coming tragedy.

[*Exit.*]

*Enter the QUEEN and EDWARD from behind a curtain, where
they have been in hiding.*

Edward. Heard you, York?

Queen. Every word.

Edward. Is it true?

Queen. What?

Edward. That you are steeped in blood of Somerset?

Queen. Aye, my heart is; my hands are not.

Edward. How so?

Queen. Two men I hir'd to kill him in the tower;
And so their hands are spotted with his blood.

Edward. What now of York since he doth know your
crime,

And doth conjecture what your purpose was?

Queen. 'Tis said that crime doth crime beget; 'tis so.
Why, York must die.

Edward. O horror!

Queen. And why horror?

Edward. 'Tis not the deed, but thinking on the deed
Doth horrify.

Queen. Then think until your thoughts
Do petrify, and match themselves unto
The stony hearts that use shall make in us.

Edward. What use?

Queen. Why, murder.

Edward. Murder!

Queen. Murder.

Edward. Hark! some one spoke!

Queen. I heard me nothing;
'Twas but the tongue of fear.

Edward. How loudly doth
It speak unto the ears of guilty minds.
I thrill so strangely that my heart-beats sound
Like to a pleading voice.—Must it be done?

Queen. Edward.

Edward. Mother.

Queen. Would you be king?

Edward. O yes!

Queen. Then York and others, too, must die.

Edward. Others?

Queen. The king, and——

Edward. Richard! O I never can
Be seated in this bloody way.

Queen. You can,
And shall. What! summon up your courage, son.
To-morrow night old York sleeps here: then is
The time. Be ready with your dagger;
Convert your heart to rock, to whet its edge,
That you may carve your way unto the throne.—
For my lord and the prince I have a plan
That for the while I'll not unfold.

Edward. But mark:
The crimson tide, that shall strand me upon
My lofty perch, will rise to greater height,
And wash me from the shore of pomp. Constraint
May make a king, but never devil saint.

Queen. Who wins a crown by blood must needs by blood
Maintain.

Edward. My spirit wills, my flesh is weak;
For I do sicken at a gory sight.

Queen. So doth the butcher killing his first lamb,
Which, after-time becomes with custom stale;
For use doth deaden sense and delicacy.
So you, as king, shall not be squeamish of
A many deaths when that a many deaths
Your kingdom gained. Be daggers in your deeds,
But oil and down in words and looks. To speak,
Have angel's tongue; to sting, a serpent's.

Edward. Hush! comes the king.

Queen.

Here is the letter to

Turn him against the prince: stand here and read.

As he doth enter, hide it hurriedly;

Express surprise, and feint embarrassment. *[Exit.]*

Edward. *[Reading letter. Enter king]* O that a son
should deceive a father!

A loving, kind, and ever trusting father.

It cannot be my brother is such villain.

King. Deceit's dire poison lurks in fairest flowers.—

What news, my son? How now? Why startled?

Edward. Your sudden coming frightened me. I heard
You not.

King. What news?

Edward. None, sir.

King. What! none? Were not

You reading as I enter'd?

Edward. I was, sir.

King. What was the matter that you read?

Edward. O nothing.

King. Then why such haste to hide that paper in
Your pocket, there?

Edward. My lord, I cannot say.

King. You cannot say? Perchance you will not say?
Wherefore your words, "O that a son should so deceive
a father," and, "It cannot be my brother is such villain?"
Give me that letter.

Edward. So please you I had rather not.

King. Give me that letter.

Edward. *[Hands letter to king]* Well, I do fear me you
will much regret the having asked.

King. *[Reads]* Brother: Nature seems to disfavor us
and favor our father. He hath long been king and is still
of so strong limb and healthy constitution that death holds
aloof from him most vexatiously. Each year he wields
the sceptre lessens my time for wearing the crown, and
likewise your chance of succession. Why is death so
perverse that it skips those we wish to die, and takes those
we would hold? Were it not our mutual vantage should
he pass into eternity? Should it be such crime were we to

aid time to prune some years from off his tree of life? Consider this well, but be careful and secret.

Richard. My son, Richard! "Prune some years from off his tree of life!" O God! wrote he that? My noble son, whom I did dote upon? How came you by this?

Edward. I found it in my room.

King. Think you they are his letters?

Edward. One egg resembles not another more than doth this writing his.

King. O too true! I've seen it many times. Here are his s's, and here the turn he gives unto his y's.

Edward. [*Aside*] My mother's imitation is most perfect.—Ten thousand pins are pricking him.

King. How short-liv'd are all earthly joys! Beneath
Yon spreading dome there is no lasting peace.
My son, my Richard, to have written this!
To wish his father dead! to plot his death!
That he might wear this gold-encircling care!
O fathers, put no confidence in sons!
Whom I did think was whiter than this sheet
Is blacker than the ink thereon. Deceit!
O damn'd, accurs'd deceit, why dost thou dwell
In noble mansions? O go thou, as do
Thy fellow toads and vipers, live in dungeons
And dark and loathsome places, as warning
Where thou abid'st.—Content and ease, farewell!
O now, farewell! farewell, tranquillity!
Farewell, the sweets of pomp and ceremony,
For I am quite undone, O, quite undone. [*Exit.*]

Edward. Suspicion's lance hath cut so deep a sore,
Each trifling prick will make it bleed the more;
He is as much put out as we would have,
For biting sorrow hurries to the grave.

SCENE III. *A Room in the Palace.*

[Flourish.]

Enter KING, RICHARD and LORDS.

King. Lords, leave us now; the Prince of Wales and I
Have private matters to discuss awhile. [*Exit Lords.*]
I'll speak not of that letter which hath racked [*Aside.*]
Me so, but touch what rumor's carried to
The public ear.

Richard. My gracious father, what
Wouldst have with me?

King. That which I would I did
Not have to have.

Richard. Thou speakest in enigmas.

King. This once thou actest in enigmas, son.

Richard. What dost thou mean?

King. I would I had the means
To tell thee what I mean.

Richard. Meantime, say what
Thou hast to say. Wherein have I incurred
Displeasure? disobey'd command of thine?
If ever I have fretted thee: how so?
If ever silver'd thy gray hairs: how so?
What have I done that thou dost wish undone?
Wherein remiss that thou dost wish me do?
Do I not live as doth become a prince,
That birth hath will'd shall follow in thy steps?
Am I not courteous, respectful, dutiful?
Who is't can say to pleasures lewd I'm bent:
Riot, debauchery, or drunkenness?
Was there a time I e'er did break thy laws,
Or did evince reluctance to obey?

King. Thou wast in all things an obedient son,
The straightest limb that ever branch'd from king,
The idol of mine eye, the cynosure
Of others. Proud? So proud was I of thee,
Mine age-bent frame became erect again,
Like a tall cedar stretching toward the sky,

About to fall but propp'd unnaturally;
For pride's a quack, and lends fictitious strength.
But now my prop is gone, for thou art changed.
'Tis said, yea, 'tis the topic of the court
That thou hast much demean'd thyself of late,
Consorting with this low-born girl, Aline;
With whom thou dost associate thine hours,
Forsaking all for her. 'Tis monstrous, Richard!
This 'haviour's such deserves a reprimand.
What sayest for thyself?

Richard. I do admit
Of being much with her; yet do deny
Of being aught demean'd thereby: for if
I step down from the pinnacle of rank,
In turn she elevates my soul. I love
Aline, your highness.

King. What! love fiddlesticks!
Lions mate not with cats, nor eagles wrens.
Youth's fancies are as fickle as the winds.
I charge thee have no more to do with her,
For thou hast stirr'd up slander and foul tongues.

Richard. Your highness, I repeat, I love the girl.

King. And, Richard, I repeat: no more with her.

Richard. But, sir——

King. No buts, no noes; but no with her.
Fond, foolish boy, dost thou not know that kings,
Kings' sons, all royal bloods, do fix their love
On policy, not sentiment. Pure streams,
That mingle with the foul, corrupted are;
And so with blood. Thou must be wedded to
The daughter of a king. And mark thou this:
If from this time I hear of thee with her,
And prove the hearing true, though it will tear
My heart-strings loose, no more I'll hold thee of
My kin! I'll bar thee from succession!
Remember well, for I will not retract. [Exit.]

Richard. A crown? my love? which shall I say 'twill be?
If I be king, I cannot have my love;
If love I have, I cannot wear the crown.
O problem hard to solve! vexatious test!
Would that I were an honest son of toil,

Who, loving, hath no form to hamper him,
No caste, degree, diplomacy, or state,
To clip the wing of his affections thus;
But takes to him the woman of his choice,
Without gainsay, and lives his days in bliss.
How infinitely happier is he,
Though at the heel and sole of poverty,
Than I, a prince, with wealth and titles great,
Whom royalty doth bound within its pale.—
Is glory more to be desir'd than love?
Why, what's in love, that glory should be less?
O glorious glory, what a power art thou!
The throne, the mace, the sceptre, and the ball,
The costly robes of state and ceremony,
The tinsel'd show, the power of patronage,
Cringing respect, and crook of servile knees,
Command of armed troops, and ships of war,
Cheers, roaring from ten thousand thousand throats,
The plaudits of a many million men:
Such is great glory's ownership. And yet,
Withal, 'tis but a shining, brittle glass,
Wherein we look and see ambition's gain,
Which, like a bauble in a child's small hand,
Doth fortune fondle, and then, tiring, breaks;
Or 'tis a breath that monster death cuts short.
What's glory then? Or what's a king, save clay?
Yea, let his obsequies be ne'er so grand,
Case him in richest wood with gold inlaid,
Bedeck with gardens of the sweetest flowers—
Ay, let him be unto palatial tomb
Convey'd by prancing steeds and martial hosts,
The multitude tear-stain'd and solemn-faced,
And I do say this gorgeous spectacle
More mocks the littleness and brevity
Of man than doth an humble burial
In some remote and lonely spot, with but
A single weeping friend.—But love dies not!
Ah, love! sweet love, what kind of god art thou,
That art so blissful yet so full of pain?
Thou art immortal, therefore art of God:
Love is the soul, 'tis the eternal soul;

Glory's of earth, the short-liv'd, dying earth.
O then to love I'll cling, let glory go;
For love is heaven's gift to us below.
My love, my love, my sweet Aline hath won!
Go, throne! go, crown! my thoughts of thee are done.

SCENE IV. *A Room in the Palace.*

Enter YORK and SERVANT.

[Thunder and Lightning.]

Servant. My lord, it is a dreadful night.

York. I have

Not seen its like in all my four-score years.

Servant. On such a night do robbers range abroad.

York. On such a night are crime and vice most meet.

Servant. On such a night detested sins are veiled.

York. On such a night do spirits wail and moan,
And these, the winds, are murmurs of their sighs.

Servant. On such a night, methinks, is murder done.

York. On such a night doth God his power portray:
His breath, the wind, doth rive the gnarled oaks,
Bending submissively the lofty pines,
And churns the seas to foamy indignation;
His voice, the thunder, cracks upon the ear,
Reverberating like the echoes of
Ten thousand guns, till all the world's in fear;
His eye, the lightning, instantaneously
Illumes the sable gloom, exposing, as
The high-set sun, the blackest villainies.

Servant. On such a night, as on all other nights,
Doth sleep encompass me. [Sleeps.]

York. Sleep on, thou knave!

O conscience clear! O free from care! how sleep
Doth cling to thee! This slave, this menial here,
His day's work done, no weight upon his mind,
His pain but weary limbs; doth touch the couch,
And lo! he's wafted to oblivion
Upon the wings of slumber, sweetest sleep.

No storm so high, no raging sea so fierce,
 When that a calm doth reign within, but sleep
 Will stop the ear: no thunder-clap he hears,
 No beating rain; all's stillness, all's serene.
 But let the tempest be of care and trouble,
 An inward gale instead of outward storm,
 And, though it be the drowsiest summer night
 That ever lull'd with balmy zephyr breeze,
 Why, aught but toss and wakefulness will be:
 Care's pillow, though of silk, is hard as lead,
 But lack of care makes soft a rocky bed.—
 And now hath care his majesty in keep.
 I am not green in this old world, and yet
 I cannot fathom to the depths of his
 New tortures. Thus I hear his anguish'd sleep:
 "O God! my boy! My Richard, my dear son,
 To prune some years from off my tree of life;"
 Then groans aloud, and moans, while sorrow's knife
 Carves furrows on his face. And why this change?
 So cold to Richard, whom he loved? Methinks
 The foul toad, slander, hath infected him——
 The queen! the queen! I'll watch and wait and——

[Sleeps.]

*Enter QUEEN and EDWARD.**Edward.* Is he asleep?*Queen.* Hush! let us see.*Edward.* Look well;

Methought I saw him move.

Queen. Deep sleep hath weighed
 His eyelids down; he is in heavy slumber.
 This is the counterfeit of death; the smybol of
 The everlasting rest. Thy dagger's thrust
 Will change the spurious coin to real. Strike! Strike!

Edward. My hand doth tremble; I dare not do it.*Queen.* Art thou afraid?*Edward.* O see how I do shake.

[Thunders.]

This awful night doth weaken me. Hark! how
 The thunder rolls; my heart beats higher than
 The winds.

Queen. Great ends oft hang on little means:
Summon thy courage up; be resolute.
Let not the elements confound thee so.

Edward. Hasten me not, but let me think on it.

Queen. O do not think, lest thought will choke thine
action,
For thinking deadens purpose; meditation
Oft cools the heat of enterprise. Strike! Strike!
Be lightning; strike!

Edward. 'Tis lightning holds mine arm;
For so its flash doth show York's peaceful face
That icy terror freezes me. Let us
Begone; I cannot do the deed.

Queen. I'll do it;
Give me the dagger.

Edward. No, no! his death
Will cry aloud for vengeance. Mother! mother!
By striking him into eternal sleep,
For evermore thou shalt strike sleep from thee.

Queen. Give me the dagger! Hand it me!

Edward. I'll not!
His qualities, sweet mercy, justice, love,
Abiding grace and charity, have in
The common's hearts so planted him that they
Will rip the earth and raze the mountains to
Sift out his murderer!

Queen. Spare words; the dagger!
[*Snatches dagger; stabs York; terrible thunder and lightning.*]

Presumption, die; die, arrogance; revenge!

Edward. [*Stabs the Servant*] Die, waking witness to
our crime! But, O,
These deaths, our bosom, as the mother,
Shall be the father of such children as
Will torture us eternally.

Queen. Quick, Edward!
Thy dagger take: the servant's leave in York.
Cover the man, and throw him in a well:
He, being gone, and thus his dagger found,
Guilt's finger will then point to him. Away. [Exit.]

Edward. O what a sorry sight! Pour, pelting rain;
Thy million drops cannot erase this stain.

[*Exit, carrying body.*]

SCENE V. *A Hall in the Palace.*

Enter SERVANTS.

First Servant. Art thou not yet awake, booby?

Second Servant. [*Yawning and stretching*] A plague on this early rising.

First Servant. Why, thou little in energy, thou enormity of gapes and yawns, a plague on thee for a sleepy dolt.

Second Servant. 'Sblood, man! dost thou begrudge me the fruits of my labor, that thou wak'st me thus before the crowing cock?

First Servant. I like thy presumption! The fruits of thy labor! Wherein dost thou labor, but laboring not to labor? Thou enormous in not doing, thou infinitesimal in doing, hadst thou sleep meted to thee as thou deserv'st thou wouldst not close thine eyes so long as for the clock to strike.

Second Servant. Alas! ever do the innocent suffer. Wherefore twitt'st thou me of idleness? When I do put this bottle to my mouth am I not busy as the bee that sucks the honey from the flower?

First Servant. Not the babe at the nipple so industrious as thou at thy sack. 'Sdeath! thou villainous lump of obesity, dost thou boast of thine iniquity?

Second Servant. Nay, rather of my virtue, for if sack—jovial, exhilarating, sleep-producing, care-forsaking, merry-making, joy-inclining sack—be no virtue, there is no virtue.

First Servant. O infamous virtue, that poisons the brains! Hadst thou such quantity of virtue as vice, thou wouldst be an infant in purity.—But go! rouse York. The prince and he have state papers to attend; he bade us call him at this hour.

Second Servant. What! the day hath not broke; it is dark.

First Servant. Thou walking brewery, thine eyes are still glued by thy drunken orgies. Were thy numskull pate opened wide as the gates of morning, thou wouldst sleep thy last sleep. Go; wake him.

[*Exit Second Servant.*]

Enter RICHARD.

Good morrow, my lord.

Richard. Good morrow. Where is York?

First Servant. He will be here directly, sir.

Richard. Was't not

A fearful night?

First Servant. Most fearful, fearful, sir!

Another such a night I would not live

For all the buried treasures in the sea.

O sir, such things as I did hear! strange screams,

Unearthly cries, and dismal groans, as if

The dead were roaming round, and tun'd their tongues

To these uncanny sounds.

Richard. 'Twas but the wind,

A-moaning 'mongst the trees.

First Servant. The earth did quake,

And once, methought, the palace tumbled down.

Richard. 'Twas but thy fancy painting with fear's brush.

First Servant. Now, when the storm was at its highest pitch,

Thrice did three ravens fly into my room,

And croak'd, and croak'd, and croak'd calamity;

Then came a crow, who gave his gloomy caw;

Then on my bed-post did an owl alight,

Who hooted terror in my frightened soul;

When, too, I saw a horrid, sheeted corpse,

His bony finger pointed thus at me;

And lastly, then, the funeral bell peal'd forth

In dreadful tones. These things are ominous signs.

Richard. 'Twas but the nightmare of thy troubled sleep.

[*Re-enter Second Servant.*]

Second Servant. O horror! horror! horror! ghastly woe!

Richard. Why, what's the matter?

First Servant.

He is drunk, my lord.

Second Servant. O bloody, gory, fiendish matter, sir.
He's dead! he's dead! dread death is king of York!
He's stiff, and stark, and cold!

Richard.

What! murdered?

First Servant. O what I saw did presage some such deed!

Second Servant. Ay, murder'd! Go and look yourselves.
Let thine

Own eyes see what I saw; be proof for me.

[*Exit Richard and First Servant.*]

O murder, murder! black and heinous murder!

Ring, ring the bell! Awake! awake! thieves! thieves!

Some thief hath rack'd the sacred house of God,

And left but worthless walls of crumbling clay.

Come forth, all ye that sleep, and look upon

This gruesome sight! Cain is within our midst!

Come, like a pack of hounds, to hunt him down!

Ring, ring the bell!

[*Bell rings.*]

Enter KING.

King. What means the startling clang
Of this iron throat? Why such confusion here,
Disturbing so our early morn repose?

[*Re-enter Richard and First Servant with York's body.*]

Second Servant. My liege, look yonder and thine eye
will tell.

King. What, York? Amazement, horror, terror, dread,
Sit on my soul! What monster's hand hath oped
These gaping wounds?

Richard. 'Twould seem his man's, my lord;
For he hath fled and left his dagger in
York's breast.

King. O York! sweet York! kind, gracious York!
O speak to me!

Richard. Not till the doom-day dawns;
His tongue's as tuneless as a stringless harp.

King. Then there's no music in the world, and wisdom's
Without a speaking-piece.

Enter QUEEN.

Queen. What is amiss?

Why is this noise, this running to and fro;
This clamor?

King. Murder hath escap'd from hell;
Whose bloody hand hath oped the mouth of fear.
Sweet York is dead, assassinated, killed!
And with him dies my hope, my prop, my staff.

Queen. Murder beneath our roof! O say not so!
O woe! O heavenly God! [*Swoons in faint.*]

Richard. Look to the queen.

King. How far'st thou, Blanch?

Queen. Bad fare; I'm faint,
And quite unnerv'd by this.

Enter EDWARD.

Edward. What's wrong?

King. All's wrong.

There's nothing right when murder's crimson flag
Sinks such a noble bark.

Edward. How now? York dead?

Richard. Nay, he is not; his body is. Himself
Shall ever live within our people's hearts.
This dagger here hath made the breach through which
The vampire, death, hath suck'd his stream of life.

Queen. Lead me away. His wounds do bleed afresh.
The sight is terrible.

King. Go, Edward, take
Her hence. [*Exit Edward and Queen.*]

O York! dear, faithful York!
My counsellor, adviser, leader, friend.
O sorrow's tempest now doth show'r mine eyes
Till they are rivers swollen by the rains.—
To the down-trodden and oppress'd, his love
Flow'd like a stream fed by incessant springs;
Refreshing as the dew to thirsting flowers
Was his sweet mercy to poor, guilty souls;
Pity and charity in him did melt

Hard enmity to tears and amity:
His words, his deeds, are living monuments.

Richard. These attributes are trumpets calling for
Revenge; each godly trait's a pleading tongue
That moves to action. Let's up and doing.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Queen's Room.*

Enter the QUEEN and EDWARD.

Edward. Belief will not take hold of him.

Queen. Why so?

Edward. The charge will be so sudden, unexpected;
A shock which——

Queen. Earthquake-like, will swallow up
His reason, shaking incredulity
From off its rocky base.

Edward. Of Richard, what?
When that Aline of witchcraft is accused,
The lion in his nature will be roused.

Queen. Why fear a lion when his strength is gone?
Know'st thou the sleek-furr'd cat is harmful more.
As beasts, so men: once down, the greatest oft
Are lesser than the lowest. Richard's out
Of favor: favor's power; the lack, weakness.
The king will hear him not; heed no more his
Blustering.

Edward. Thunder's faint unto the range
Hot anger'll give his voice.

Queen. As harmless, too.
What danger's in noise? Thunder's hurtless:
Great noises have the least effect: still yet
The braggart's weapon is his tongue; and, too,
With futile effort roars the wounded beast,
Who, dying, looks upon his foe.

Edward. But mark:
Her beauty will approve her innocence,

Striking all hearts alike with indignation,
Being accus'd with such nefarious practice;
For never witch hath had so sweet a face.

Queen. I hate her that she is belov'd by him!
How could I tear her beauty with these nails,
And set my badge of hatred on her cheek!
But patience! I will prove her witch, and laugh
At Richard's agony. O now I see
The falling axe, the jutting crimson stream,
Staining her golden locks; her anguish'd cry——

Edward. But list! E'er since I have observ'd these
things,
At gibbet, block, or executioners' hands,
I've seen but weird, distorted, crooked hags;
Whose wrinkled faces, and dark, midnight brows
Did presage evil: she, so opposite,
Thou canst not pass as witch.

Queen. Leave all to me.
O hate, inject thy poison so in me
That I may be infectious to the king;
Whereon my breath of lies and stratagems,
Like winds from baleful weeds, shall poison him;
The which contagion blur his sight, and choke
Those channels of his blood that feed his judgment;
Black superstition, blind his eyes to beauty,
Distort her form to horrid ugliness,
And all ye imps of hell aid me to paint
Her wick'd.—But yet, begone; I would alone.

Edward. May fortune smile on thee in all thou dost.
[*Exit.*]

Queen. Another purpose now that Edward knows
Not of: most weighty and most secret is't:
Whom I do wait for hath no inkling what
He aids. This doctor is to meet me here;
Which poverty hath brought to dire distress,
Hunger's sharp tooth hath gnaw'd his flesh away,
And pinching want made lean his robust frame.
I saw him; studied him; and offer'd gold
For mortal drugs, 'gainst which the law's express:
Want cried acceptance, fear did hesitate.
But need is stronger than the dread of law;

Consent he gave to bring the poisons.— [*Enter Doctor.*]
I hear a step; 'tis he.—Good doctor, hast
Thou brought those drugs?

Doctor. Your highness, ay; I have.

Queen. Two kinds, as I did say?

Doctor. Yea, madam, two;
Each mortal but in different ways: herein's
A potion deadly more than aspic's bite;
Who takes it, takes to death so instantly,
There's scarce a breath betwixt the swallow and
Eternity.

Queen. O precious drug! O balm,
Obliviating care! sweet draught, whose sip
Can cool the sweat of woe and misery!
O priceless boon!

Doctor. This bane is slow to act,
Yet sure. A tiny drop in food or drink,
Adminster'd from time to time, will 'gin
To show its power; the functions sicken; lose
Their natural office; death doth follow closely

Queen. Can science note the cause?

Doctor. Why, truly, no:
Detection hides itself; physicians wonder;
Consult; look wise; know nothing; skill is baffled.
Queen. Thou hast done well; here is thy gold. Give me
The phials and get thee gone.

Doctor. [*Hands her phials.*] These serpents take.
Have care they sting thee not; beware mistake.
And prithee, madam, keep this secret, else
My head's in jeopardy. [*Exit.*]

Queen. Well, what? How now?
An adder in each hand: death's instruments.
Whom shall they strike? Ambition's aim is high;
Shoots at the top: who lofty as the king?
My bow is drawn, whose shaft will bring him down;
And Richard, too. Let them look to themselves.
There is no hate like to a woman's hate,
Nor none so desperate in chance with fate.

SCENE II. *A Street in London.**Enter GILBERT and SECOND SERVANT.**Gilbert.* Call him not that!*Second Servant.* How?*Gilbert.* Call him not that.*Second Servant.* Marry! an I please, I'll call him what I want.*Gilbert.* Marry! an thou speak'st him ill, 'twill be ill for thee.*Second Servant.* He's a clodpoll!*Gilbert.* Sir!*Second Servant.* He's a clout; a numskull!*Gilbert.* Sir!*Second Servant.* He's a wind-bag; a talking tempest!*Gilbert.* Sir! have care!*Second Servant.* I care not for thee; he's a recreant, a coward.*Gilbert.* Hold thy tongue!*Second Servant.* A rogue, a wretch, a dastardly villain—*Gilbert.* Why, thou lubberly cur, I'll cleave thy skull.*Second Servant.* An thou cleav'st not my tongue until I speak my mind. I am content.—But answer this: wherein is he a man?*Gilbert.* Thou sea of impudence, wherein is he not?*Second Servant.* Dost thou mistake face or form for man?*Gilbert.* An I did 'twould be a pretty piece of stinking, pudgy flesh I'd take for thee.*Second Servant.* Yet answer'st thou not my question: "Wherein is he a man?" Remember this: beauty is a falsifier, a placid shoal hiding treacherous rocks; form is deception, delusive as the ways of woman.*Gilbert.* Truly the outside reports not the inside; yet what goes to make a man he hath, such as these: truth, honesty, courage, industry, temperance, charity, gentleness, constancy; slow to move in anger, but, justly moved, unmovable; in peace mild as a babe, in war a tiger; his mouth not doing his deeds, spending such little breath

as would but rustle the violet, yet his action being a hurricane; promising little, giving bountifully; prodigal to friends, not hating enemies; glue in friendship, slippery in nothing, but haste from evil and dishonor. Such is he: and what more qualities want'st thou in man.

Second Servant. Forsooth, thou dost picture a man, showing the opposites of him thou speak'st.—What! art so blind to baseness? An thou believ'st what thou say'st, thou dost pervert thine organs of sense that God gave thee.—'Sblood! thou see'st with thine ears, hear'st with thine eyes, smell'st with thy mouth, and tast'st with thy nose.—Goodness abides in him no more than meat in a stone; but lying, treachery, cowardice, sloth, gluttony, braggadocio, thrive like leaves upon a tree: blustering as a spurless bantam, he is a giant in words, in deeds a pigmy; he hath the brains of an ass, the churlishness of a bear, the manners of a boor, the appetite of a hog, the cruelty of a wolf, and the courage of a sheep: in short, his merits are the tithe of a rain-drop, his demerits measureless as the sea.

Gilbert. Why, thou great hulk of wickedness, thou look'st in a glass and see'st thyself.

Second Servant. Thou liest! for therein would be shown a mansion where dwell'th valor, truth, and honor.

Gilbert. By heaven, man, tell me not I lie!

Second Servant. Tell me not I see myself in him!

Gilbert. Thou art a base defamer that, being rotten thyself and smelling thine own stink, thinking it comes from others, belabor them with thy vile tongue; having good speech for none.

Second Servant. Thou lanky knave, thou liest!

Gilbert. Thou hast fired me out of all patience. Draw, sir, draw! I'll tap thee as thou wert a barrel of sack.

Second Servant. An thou draw'st my blood, I forgive thee; but not my sack. I'll defend that. Come on, sir.

[*They fight.*]

Enter FIRST SERVANT.

First Servant. What! at it pell-mell? Come off, thou tub of rank butter; put up thy sword.

Second Servant. I'll run him to the hilt!

Gilbert. An thou runn'st not soon, thou ne'er wilt run again, for I will stick thee as a hog, and glut the market with diseased pork!

First Servant. Hold! Enough! Art not ashamed, disturbing the king's peace? Sheathe thy steel, or, by Mars! who strikes first I'll pierce him through. [*They desist.*]

Gilbert. Know'st thou he gave me the lie, which I take from no man.

Second Servant. He called me a base defamer; said I was rotten and smelt mine own stink.

First Servant. I'll warrant neither know'st wherefore thou quarrel'st.

Gilbert. What! know not? He spoke disparagingly of my master, the prince; called Richard vile names——

Second Servant. What say'st? the prince? I spake of Edward.

Gilbert. Didst thou not mean Richard when thou saidst—clout, rogue, villain, and that his merits were but the tithe of a rain-drop?

Second Servant. Marry! all was of Edward, the queen's son.

Gilbert. Of Edward! Beshrew me, I did think thou spake of my master. Then have I no quarrel with thee.

Second Servant. Nor I with thee; let us be friends.

First Servant. Did I not say thou knew'st not wherefore thou didst quarrel? And yet at swords' points for each other's blood. Well, well, so runs the world:

Misunderstanding is the father of

Most strife, which heated passion gives birth to;

And men and nations, in their hasty wrath,

Rush where deliberation would not go.

How many bloody conflicts, woeful deeds,

Had been averted if but understood!

If thou must quarr'l, be sure thy quarr'l is just,

Nor strike one blow till thou dost know wherefore.

O that this were the policy of men!

How many then would be alive now dead!

How many enemies had been best friends!

How many grewsome battles never fought,

And widows, orphans, had no wailing loss!

But look! see where Prince Richard comes.

Gilbert. And *Regnault*, French ambassador. Let's on.
[*Exit.*]

Enter *RICHARD* and *REGNAULT*.

Regnault. 'Tis useless.

Richard. Hast no clue?

Regnault. None, none; I shall
To France with the same weary tale: no news.

Richard. Well, truly, *Regnault*, it hath been so long,
'Twould be a miracle to find her now.
Think'st thou not so?

Regnault. I do; so told the king;
But he, like shipwreck'd sailor on a spar,
Holds fast to hope.

Richard. How fares his majesty?

Regnault. Fair weather mostly, mingled with slight
clouds;
Yet ever and anon a sadness comes:
He muses on the past, his baby girl;
A gentle sorrow rains his eyes and wets
His cheeks; but then, as peeps the sun through showers
Of summer-time, he smiles betwixt his tears,
And says: "Why, God is just; all will be well;"
For he is patient, O so patient now.

Richard. Ah! *Regnault*, trials oft neal a heart of iron,
Tempering hard natures to soft woman's kind;
For sorrow's torrents drown out anger's fires,
And sighs of sadness cool hot wrath's desires.

[*Great noise within; shouts and cries.*]
What noise is that?

Regnault. Some brawling ruffians' row,
That ever 'sturbs the general peace.

Richard. Soft, soft,
They come.

Enter *EDWARD*, with soldiers having *Aline* in arrest; followed by a rabble of citizens.

Edward. Make way! In the king's name, make way!

First Citizen. Down with the witch.

Second Citizen.

Whip her!

Third Citizen.

Burn her! Burn her!

All. Ay, to the stake! Death to all witches!

Richard. O God! my senses are benumb'd! Look, eyes! Hear, ears! And yet thou'rt false; I'll trust thee not! O sight, see not what thou dost seem to see! O ears, hear not what thou dost seem to hear!—What cry these men?

Regnault. This woman is a witch,
They say.

Richard. This woman! she? O God! what lies! Damn'd accusation! most accursed charge! Why, this is she—great Heaven, hear me now—Whom I do love more than my precious life! A witch? What! hath the world turn'd inside out, And all the fiends of hell let loose their tongues Against an angel's virtue and fair name?

First Citizen. On to the gibbet!

Second Citizen. She must die!

Third Citizen. Ay, death!

First Citizen. Her beauty cannot save her!

All. No, no; death!

Death to the witch! Let her have no trial!

Richard. Stand back, ye curs! ye English dogs! 'Tis I, Prince Richard, speaks!

All. Hear! hear! the prince! the prince!

First Citizen. Well, what of him? he's out of fashion now.

Second Citizen. A sometime prince, that calls us curs and dogs!

Third Citizen. Give him no ear!

All. Ay, ay; list to him not!

Edward. Make way; 'tis the king's order; move on!

Richard. Who moves a step shall step into his grave! Avaunt! out of my sight, thou recreant!

[*Rushes at Edward, who shields behind soldiers.*]

Tempt not my virtuous blade.

Edward. O keep him back!

Protect me, soldiers! fierceness hath him now;
He looks the wounded tiger.

Richard. Looks! Why, I
Shall act it, too!—Who makes the charge against
This lady here?

Officer. The queen, my lord.

Richard. The queen!
Atrocious fiend form'd in a woman's shape!
I bid thee let her go; I'll stand the brunt.

Officer. My lord, it cannot be. I honor thee,
For thou dost ornament bright honor's jewel:
I know thee brave: thou wast my captain, sir;
In bruising war we fought together; side
By side we scatter'd death upon the foe;
Retreat did know thee not; thou never fled,
Save from pale fear, embracing courage ever.
In camp none bore their hardships with less plaint:
Nor biting winter's blasts, nor famine's pangs,
But thou didst share with us alike in all:
And for these things thou hast mine admiration.
Once, with thy mighty axe, thou hewed'st through
The serried ranks, and turn'd aside a blow,
A mortal blow, aim'd at my life: therefore,
I love thee: for thy good would jump a precipice,
Take this from this, or torture at the stake.
But yet thou know'st that honor is o'er all:
A soldier must obey; the king hath said,
"Do this:" she cannot go.—Adieu!—Move on!

[*Move slowly on.*]

First Citizen. Ay, on; move on!

Second Citizen. No more delay!

Third Citizen. To the hall!

All. No, no; unto the gibbet, block, or stake!

Richard. Ye hounds! ye heartless stones! ye shame of
men—
[*Rushes at them.*]

Aline. Be calm, dear Richard.—Come! They take me to
The king. What harm's in that? He'll find all false.
Is not he just and wise? If not, how king?
I am no witch.—Why should the queen so charge?
I fear it is her hate for thee.—O I
Have caus'd thee many, many bitter trials!
But come, my love, come to the justice hall.

[*Exit Aline, Edward, troops and rabble.*]

Regnault. [*Aside*] That voice! What memories cluster round that voice!

So spake the queen of France.

Richard. I will be calm.—

Into the cooling waters of sweet patience

Dive anger for a time; hot wrath, flame not.

Yes, yes, I will be calm. Haste, Regnault, haste!—

I come, Aline. I come.

SCENE III. *A Hall of Justice.*

Enter KING, QUEEN, RICHARD, EDWARD, WARWICK, BUCKINGHAM, REGNAULT, CONSTANCE, LORDS; ALINE under guard.

King. Stand forth, Aline.—Who doth accuse this girl?

Queen. Your majesty, I, Blanch, fair England's queen.

King. What is thy charge?

Queen. That she's a witch who,
'gainst

The mandates of thy law express, doth with

The devil play; to whom strange powers are given:

Conjuring up uncanny, startling sights,

And casting spells.

King. A serious charge, my lords.

Buckingham. Most grave, my liege.

Warwick. And most improbable.

Yet still, 'tis grave till prov'd to be not grave.

King. If not so prov'd 'twill mean a grave for her,

For I'm resolv'd to crush this viper out.

I will be stern: no pity, mercy, no,

Nor yet one grain of melting tenderness,

Shall soften me to lenience; cruel death

To witches hence, for witchcraft must be killed.—

What say'st thou, girl? Art guilty?

Aline. No; my liege.

Queen. She lies!

King. She lies not long upon her answer.

Aline. Why, no; most gracious majesty, great king.

Truth's ever brief, needs no embellishment:

You sav a circle's round, that white is white,

And windy phrases cannot add thereto;

So truth is truth.—Thou saidst, “Art guilty?”
I saying “No,” spake volumes in a breath.

Queen. She lies! she lies whole books of lies!

Aline.

My liege,

The innocent are briefest in their speech;

Guilt doth attempt to gilt its guiltiness.

Again, I say I am not guilty, sir.

Queen. Again I say she lies!

Richard.

An she but said

Thou liest not, then, only, she had lied.

King. Peace, Richard, peace.

Richard.

Yet let her show some proof.

Buckingham. Truly, it is but just, my liege.

Warwick.

Ay, just;

And justice more will grace thy crown than jewels.

King. Wherefore dost thou accuse this girl as witch?

I hate her not, this maid; but only hate

That Richard woos her which is lowly born.

I ne’er did think her wicked, vile, or base,

Forsooth, there is no evil in her face;

Freedom from sin, and purity sit there

Like to an angel fill’d with heavenly bliss:

Gaze I into her violet eyes; as when

I glance at the deep-azure sky above,

Or view the spaceful sea, or mountain’s range,

Amaz’d, awe-stricken, wondering at his power;

Repose, sweet peace, and calmness swell in me,

Such is the majesty of wondrous beauty.

Queen. Such is the magic of her charms as witch!

King. What proofs hast thou?

Queen.

First, this: I do contend,

I charge, that she did cast a spell o’er me,

Brought to mine eyes a fearful apparition,

The ghost of Somerset, that frightened me

Into a faint; since when I’ve been inclined

To fits, so shock’d it all my nervous system.

Who could have done this but a witch, my liege?

Richard. Who but a fiendish woman scheme such lie!

King. O had I York to give me counsel now!

In wisdom’s soil each frosted hair did root,

That was imbedded in his noble head:

His ways were ways of Solomon; so wise.

Queen. Why, to my point: hadst thou but York! Where's York?

Dead! dead! This many day enrich'd the earth,
The barren earth, that holds the mightiest minds,
The earth, so poor and yet of matchless wealth,
Where lie all generations of mankind;
Abiding place of monarch, magnate, slave;
Ay, York is dead.—But yet, how met he death?
That is the question.—Dost thou say a dagger?
Well, let it be: who struck the dagger, sirs?
His servant? Why? What cause? Dost thou know that?
Perhaps it was, perhaps 'twas not: I say
'Twas he, and have a reason for belief.
Hark to me now: this woman is a witch;
Hates us for that we do oppose her aim
To gain the prince; thus takes her dire revenge:
Sick'ns me with fear, strikes at thy love for York;
The servant kills his master; never knew
He did the deed, being bewitch'd by her.
She is the murderer! Death to the witch!

King. O horrible! I cannot credit it.

Edward. How daring cunning is my mother. [*Aside.*]

Richard. Who will believe such an atrocious tale?
Believe sin would in terror fly from her!
What! murder! She? She'd murder murder with
Her purity! Look there, my liege, my lords,
And be asham'd to speak such shame of her!

[*Points at Aline.*]

Queen. Gold bindings cover oft the foulest stuff.
Deck sin with beauty and the sight is blind;
Let not thy judgment rest within thine eye.

King. O beauty is a quicksand, treacherous shoal!
Yet I must needs more proof.

Buckingham. Ay, more, sweet queen.

Warwick. More proof? Well, I'm a soldier: rough,
uncouth;

Tutor'd in wars, campaigns, and battlefields;
Naught do I know of quibbles, quirks, intrigues;
The law's a maze. But this, my liege, I say:
There is some deviltry plann'd 'gainst this maid;
I cannot fathom it; do not pretend.

Yet hear me thus: did every living mouth,
 Within each mouth ten tongues, each tongue ten times
 To speak, attempt to prove this charge of her,
 'Twould be no proof to me!

Richard. Now, heaven bless thee!

O Warwick, how I love thee for that speech!

Queen. What! Warwick, too, cast in a spell! My liege,
 Beware! here falls thy sturdy warrior:
 Witchcraft droops oaks as well as humble pines;
 Therein 'tis like the lightning's dart, that splits
 Great trees as facile as the tender shoot.—
 My lords, hast noted thou the king's condition?
 How that of late he's constant ill and sick?
 Where hath his color flown? his cheeks are sunk,
 Deep set his eyes, like hermits in a cave;
 His veins stand out as furrows in a field,
 Plough'd for the summer corn. What ailment's this?
 Dost say disease? the lot of man? Ah, no!
 He's blighted by this witch's withering power.

King. O God! can it be so?—Why, yes, it is:
 Else would the doctors lack not so in skill,
 Else medicines lose not their remedies;
 For I am wasting; life is sapping fast,
 And none do know the cause.

Queen. [*Aside*] Why, yes, there's one.
 How well my poison works.

King. She's guilty; I'm convinc'd; I see all now.
 And Richard is my noble Richard still:
 But he's bewitch'd; so, loves such common stock;
 Yet, 'tis not love, but mesh'd in magic's web:
 So, wrote that letter to our Edward there:
 "To prune some years from off my tree of life."

Richard. That letter? How?

King. That letter! Agony!
 Keen torture! O 'twas rack, and block, and stake!

Richard. Speak! speak! What letter? Never wrote I
 him.

King. O Richard! What? Dost not remember? No?
 Why shouldst thou, though, since thou art sore bewitched?
 Yea, cozen'd, charm'd, cajol'd by devilish means!
 Thou wrot'st the letter, yet knew'st not thou didst;

Thou'rt not to blame: I'm happy that thou'rt not.

Queen. [*Aside*] Again in favor? Well, this runs into An act I did not see. But I will play It out.

King. She's guilty: death's the penalty; She must pay it.

Queen. Then Richard is himself Once more; then health is thine; the curse is gone: Her death is life to thee.

King. She dies, the witch! O let it be the block! let fall the axe!

Warwick. My liege, be not precipitate, be calm. Haste here is woeful sin; be just: hear her.

King. Too late! too late! she is condemn'd; must die!

Warwick. I prithee give her audience, my liege.

Aline. No, noble Warwick, no. I've naught to say, But what I've said, save this: I fear not death.

God knows me true; what have I then to dread?

Death's but a sleep to wake in sweetest bliss:

True't clips earth's tender cords (therein 'tis keen)

But ties the bonds of heaven's eternal joys,

When those that die are fit. I'm ready, sirs:

I ne'er have done a wrong to any one;

Fearless, can look my Maker in the face.

Queen. Come; shut the hussy up!

Aline. But one word more.

Your majesty, no malice bear I thee.

Thou dost believe me guilty of a crime,

But 'tis thy head doth err and not thy heart:

Mine innocence shall, in thy better hours,

When judgment's ripe, nor scorch'd by anger's fire,

Haunt thee with sharp remorse. Still yet, my liege,

I do forgive. I have no malice, none;

Not even hate I her, the queen, that bears

So hard with me; God pity her and thee.

My soul's at peace with all mankind: how could

I better leave the world? Farewell to all!

Dear mother, 'tis His will; grieve not for me.—

[*Richard comes to her.*]

Well, what, my love? wilt weep? wilt mourn for me?

Nay, love, let smilets play upon thy face.

Like sunbeams dancing in the happy morn;
Yea, laugh at death's attempt to sever us!
Laugh, laugh to scorn the fell-descending stroke:
'Twill cleave my head; but, O, my soul is thine!
Nor axe, nor death, nor aught can make us twain!
Inseparable, united, perfect unison,
Love knits us one forever, evermore!
Farewell! O fare thee well!

King. O sick! so sick! Take her away! away!
The tower! the tower! and then the block! the axe!
[*Soldiers move slowly away with her. Richard rushes in
front of them.*]

Richard. Hold! hold! nor yet a step! back! back! ye
minions!—

But soft! Why rant I so? 'Tis useless, naught.
Futile is one against a king's great power.
Would that mine arms could wield a thousand swords,
Or that mine eyes shot death whereon they looked!

[*Soldiers draw.*]

What! draw'st? O God! hath't come to this.—Well, draw!
Ay, smear thy blades as though I were a rat;
For not a groat, one little groat, care I!
What's life to me when she is gone—Aline?
What's day without the sun, or night no moon?
Time was, it was above all else—my life:
Ambition, glory, then illum'd my skies,
Till shining love outshone these lesser beams,
Flooding with ecstasy: now life is love.
Snuff out my love; why then come, death! O come!
And I will court thee, yea, embrace thee, death!
Without thee would be darkness, deep despair!
What's so remorseless as a woman's hate?
The charge! the charge, my liege! Aline a witch?
So says the queen: what moves her so to say?
Damn'd hate, black spite, accursed jealousy!
How so? In murdering her she murders me:
Thou hast a crown; she hath a son: what more?
An thou believ'st this beauteous maid so vile,
Then justice, reason, judgment's hied away!
O God! the ignorance of the times! A witch!

What is't to be a witch? Is it to be
So pure that e'en the whirling snowflake, ere
It touch the earth, is foul thereto? Is it——

[*King suddenly becomes very sick.*]

Buckingham. How now, my liege?

Warwick. What ails your majesty?

King. The spell! the spell! O God! I am on fire!
There is a furnace burning up my bowels!
Out of my sight, damn'd witch! Away! Away!

[*Soldiers take Aline out.*]

Constance. [*Rises in great excitement*] O hear me, king!

O call her back! O list!

I have such things to tell; deep mysteries.
I have been patient, patient all the while;
But hear me now——

King. No more; no ear to thee.

Constance. I'm not her mother; she is not my child!
She's stolen! stolen from a golden nest
By an ensnaring hawk, mad with revenge.
Of lofty birth: born in an eagle's aerie,
She's noble! Search my house; find there the dress,
The trinkets, that will show her nobleness!

Regnault. [*Aside*] Is this the raving of a distraught
mind?—

Yet Aline's voice! Methinks it is the clue.

O I will haste: my blood's at fever heat! [*Exit in hurry.*]

Richard. O Constance, would that I were mad as thee!
Distracted reason feels no pangs of grief.

Constance. I am not mad! my reason is not wild—

King. Look! look! mine arm! 'tis withered, blasted,
shrunk!

I'm wrecked, ruined, palsied, paralyzed!

Queen. [*Aside*] Now, blessed be the poison that did this.

King. She, too, 's a witch! Out of my sight, thou hag!
There's death within thy glance! O death, glance thou
On her! [*Exit king in terror, followed by all in confusion.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I. *The Executioner's.*

Enter KING, QUEEN, EDWARD, BUCKINGHAM, LORDS and Executioner.

King. Now, He that balms diseases of the mind,
Be comfort to my soul: root out, O Lord,
The thorny weeds that sore entangle me;
All doubts, all fears, eradicate; implant
Assurance, peace, content—sweet flow'rs, that bloom
In tranquil minds.

Edward. Be of good cheer, my liege.

Buckingham. To undo ill or punish evil thus
Is gracious in His sight: therefore rejoice.

King. Not for revenge, O Lord, take I these lives,
But justice——

Edward. Justice! what so meet for kings?
Just to thy subjects, to thyself, and God.

Buckingham. Wherefore repine since justice calls for
death?

There is no plaint 'gainst justice, my dear liege,
For there's no limit to its benefit;
Which centres not upon a single self,
Nor yet alone doth favor birth or state,
But is as universal as the air,
Spreading its genial blessing everywhere.
Who's just unto himself is just to God;
To God, himself; and therefore to all men.
Why then dost fret? Why hast thou doubts or fears?

King. I am encompassed in a vale of fear,
And foggy clouds of doubt encircle me.
I would not err and slay the innocent
For all the princely kingdoms of the world.

Queen. How canst thou err when justice pleads these
deaths?

King. In striving to be just, man's oft unjust,
Our judgment is so frail.

Queen. Hast thou not proofs?

King. What seem as such?

Edward. Let them suffice, my liege.

Buckingham. I pray do not retract, your majesty.

King. Yet I do dread regrets; remorse will come.

Queen. O be thou just and thou shalt 'scape regrets.

Buckingham. Regrets, my liege, come not from duty
done,

Nor doth remorse; the lack thereof gives birth
To each: they hang their heavy weight around
The neck of negligence, and press the breast
Wherein injustice lies. Thou'lt none of these,
Lest that thou dost retract.

King. I was persuaded,
Convinc'd they both were witches; gave sentence, too.
Last night I had a dream: an angel came;
Spoke of dire happenings within our realm—
Of floods, of plagues, of wars, calamities—
If that these women were thus put to death.
In agony I woke; great beads of sweat,
Like rain-drops on the eaves, stood out on me;
I shook with terror; then recall'd their doom—
But that was in the black and hideous night,
When horrors magnify: now, when the sun
Shines proudly forth and gilds the blithesome day,
I am less fearful; still some dregs remain.

Edward. Methinks thy dream was but a nightmare, sir.

Buckingham. The stomach acts directly on the brain,
Whose overcharge works havoc in the mind,
Its functions being weak: the indigest
Oppresses sleep, breaks slumber's quietness.
This angel, with his phophecies, this dream,
Was a rich morsel that did check the blood,
Some food that lay like lead.

Queen. 'Tis wisely said.
Before retiring thou didst eat those things
That with thee disagree.

King. And thus the dream.
Again I'm satisfied. O that I did
Not waver so.

Queen. Be firm; be resolute:
In purpose be a rock, not shifting sand;
Kings should be oaks unbending to each breeze.
Thou hast already said let this be done:
This is the time, the place, here is the block,
There stands the executioner. What now?
I prithee falter not: give thou command.
Let not sleep's idle vagaries withhold
The hand of justice.

Edward. O, my liege, be just.

Buckingham. Justice becomes all men: who more than
kings?

I have no hate, but would not break thy law,
Which is express 'gainst witches and their craft.

Queen. If just none will decry thee; none, I say,
That stand for government or public weal,
Show me that man who rails on justice, yea,
Who cries thereon, and I shall say "beware!"
There's danger, there no spark of honor burns.

King. Go, executioner, bring forth the witches.

Queen. Let them be veiled; gagg'd; securely bound,
Lest they again afflict his majesty.

King. No more shall I upon her beauty gaze,
Or hear her speak: she is a basilisk.
Haste, thou; do as the queen hath bid.

[*Exit Executioner.*]

Where's Warwick?

Queen. Brooding.

King. Over what?

Queen. Her death.

Buckingham. He differs with your majesty; believes
Her innocent, and presages disaster.

Edward. Mark you, my liege: treason hath hold of him.

King. My Warwick!

Buckingham. Ay, his loyalty doth shake,
And totters like a drunken man that strives
To check his fall.

Enter WARWICK and RICHARD.

Queen Look where they come—the prince
And him. Note well his dark and gloomy brows:
Beneath black clouds is mostly hid a storm.

King. How now? Why, Warwick, dost thou downcast
look?

Warwick. My face's my heart; here no deception lies:
Downcast I look for that I am cast down.
O my dread liege, thou know'st not what thou dost.
Long have I serv'd thee, sir: what was my youth,
Ere that my velvet cheek did boast a hair,
But tented fields and marches, wars, campaigns;
What, too, my age but such? Upon this trunk,
This time-worn, batter'd tree, seek not for scars;
Search thou where scars are not and never find.
Thy foes have been my foes, thy friends my friends:
Have I been faithful, loyal, true? Then hear:
I am so now no more, for thou dost err,
Most grievously dost err; a fiend leads thee;
I follow not where devils lead. The queen——

Queen. Put him in irons!

Edward. Ay, this is treason, sir.

King. Now sticks another dagger in my breast.

*Re-enter EXECUTIONER with ALINE and CONSTANCE, bound,
veiled and gagged.*

Warwick. Most mighty sovereign, Pilate wash'd his
hands
Of our dear Saviour's blood: Do thou this more:
Here is the executioner; bid him
Depart; unloose these women's bonds; free them;
Or thou shalt crucify thy kingdom's peace.
And ever rue these murders thou commit'st!

King. What! murders? Warwick, cease! No more, I
say.

Arrest I thee in treason's name: bind him.

[*Warwick put in irons.*]

Richard. Is Warwick traitor? No! Ne'er yet so true:
No man's untrue that to himself is true.

Our first oath is to God; then to our king:
 Can one be traitor that his conscience serves?
 Is that man false that doth forsake the wrong?
 If this be treason, I am treasonable:
 Put me in irons.

Buckingham. Let him be bound, my liege,
 Lest he may harm himself: they live and yet
 He's in their power.

Queen. Why, Buckingham says true.

King. Bind him awhile.—Now, silence all; dispatch.

[*Richard bound*]

Go; sound the knell: and on its stroke, strike thou,
 O executioner, the head from this
 Fair girl that, in the sight of God and man,
 Is guilty as a witch.

[*Exit attendants; Aline is placed on the block.*]

Richard. O God! O God!

Why dost afflict me so? O reason, flee!
 Come, madness, eat my sense of sorrow up!
 Come, come, insanity, woe's blessed nurse,
 Root out remembrance! blot my memory!
 Or better, death, come thou and visit me;
 And course thy icy river through my veins,
 And freeze the streams and channels of my blood,
 To cool the fever in my brain. O come!
 I'll smile with greeting, kiss, and fondle thee,
 As though thou wert my love.—Wilt thou not come?
 Why, death, art thou so obstinate, perverse?
 Thou thrust'st thyself where thou unwelcome art;
 Where, as a monster held, there pluck'st thy fruit;
 Who fear thee, find thee; yearn thee, yearn in vain;
 The mother-loved babe is thine; thou prun'st
 Ambition's seekers in their bloom; midst joy
 Plant'st sorrow, sowing mortal seed wherein
 Reign golden prospects; yet forsak'st the hopeless
 And shun'st the miserable; yea, leav'st t' forlorn
 To hoary age's rusty scythe. O death!
 I do entreat thee, come! [*Knell sounds.*] The knell! the
 knell!

My world is done! now this fell stroke snuffs all
 The candles of my life: dark void is mine.

'Tis anguish more to have no life and live,
Than, having life, to die.

[*The axe is ascending: Regnault rushes in, seizes the executioner's arm; checks the blow.*]

Regnault. Hold! hold thine arm, base man! Down with thy axe!

Queen. What stay is this?

Regnault. A stay that will unstay
These bonds that chafe her lily-whiter skin.
Undo them, man! they're not for such as she.

King. Regnault, what doth this thunder-clap portend?

Regnault. Rain, lightning, storm, destruction, devastation:

All France aflame with fiery indignation,
All England smoky with the cloud of war,
Shall but one drop, one precious drop, of her
Most royal blood be spill'd!

King. All France aflame?
Her royal blood? What dost thou mean?

Regnault. But this:
Thou know'st why I did come unto thy court:
Sent by my liege to seek his long-lost child;
Nor have I fruitless sought. O England, list!
Wouldst thou have cleft this head, this golden head?
Why, it was made to wear a golden crown?
Here stands the daughter of the king of France—
The princess Margaret!

King. Can this be true?

Regnault. The truest trueness ever tried for truth.

Queen. The falsest falseness ever palm'd for truth.

Edward. Heed not his tale.

King. Out on ye owls, I will!
So spake the woman Constance, as he says:
I heeded not; him shall I hear. Go on:
What doth assure thee of her noble birth?

Richard. [*Aside*] Sit still, my heart, or thou wilt jump
my throat!
Drink all, my greedy ears.

Regnault. These are my proofs:
First, 'twas her voice caught me; in that did speak
Her mother, for two notes upon one string
Were not so like.

Queen. Why, what's in that? Oft'hath
A voice its duplicate.

Regnault. Then at the trial
Did frantic Constance cry her not her child;
Implor'd thee search her house for proofs of her
Nobility; which I did take upon
Myself to do: thence fled in haste.

King. Go on;
What didst thou find?

Regnault. [*Showing the dress*] The little dress she
wore

When stolen from our court.

King. Yea, yea; what more?

Regnault. I have minute description of the jewels
[*Gives king paper.*]

She had on at the time; and here are those,
Found in their home, that tally with my list:

[*Showing jewels.*]

Here is the tiny, diamond-mounted ring;
And these most priceless bracelets girt her arms;
These gems hung round her alabaster neck
Like dew-drops on the morning rose.

King. All's well:
As egg to egg so they do show to this.

Regnault. But more, your majesty: this locket here—
Read its description there—examine it;
See what it doth contain.

King. [*Opens it*] The queen of France!
A perfect likeness! so look'd she when first
I saw her beauty. Wore she this?

Regnault. She did:
Was plac'd upon her infant breast the day
Before the theft.

King. I do believe that she
Is she whom thou dost seek.

Queen. Be prudent, sir.
Glue not thyself too quickly to belief;
Have care; for most unlikely is all this:
The jewels may be good semblance of the real;
What is there strange to wear a queen's portrait?

Regnault. Your majesty, hast thou not heard me speak
Of a birth-mark, a mole upon her arm?

King. Shap'd like the fleur-de-lis? I have.

Regnault.

See, now.

[*Rips sleeve; shows mole.*]

I rip her sleeve. Look! look! and doubt no more!

King. The mole! the mole! there is the fleur-de-lis!

'Tis she! 'tis she! Take from her mouth that gag.

That muffles so her silver voice! Off bonds!

[*Unbound, ungagged.*]

Bow all! Yea, bend thy knees, ye lesser lights,

To France's princess found. [*Homage to her.*]

Richard.

She's sav'd! she's sav'd!

O wondrous are the miracles of God!

King. Drop, fetters, from my son. [*Richard unbound.*]

Richard. [*Clasps Margaret in his arms*] From death to life!

O live forever here! my love! my Margaret!

Margaret. As true to thee as ever woman was!

But not one whit more true as princess than

As thy poor, humble love, Aline. O love!

Nor rank, nor wealth, e'er yet enrich'd a heart.

King. I thank thee, God! No witchcraft there, but love's Sweet witchery.

Margaret. O set dear Constance free.

King. Unbind her, man. [*To Constance*] What part hadst thou in this?

Constance. O I am guilty, sir; 'twas for revenge;
My husband stole her; I the secret kept;
Upon his death still hid the light, for fear
Of punishment. Put me to death, great king.

Margaret. Nay, heed her not; I love her as a mother.

King. Constance, I leave thee to the king of France.

Margaret. [*To Constance*] Assure thee, I shall make him pardon thee.

King. What! Warwick still in irons! Shake off his bars. [*Unbound.*]

Thou art as wise as valiant: rugged fellow,
I love thee more than ever.—How is't, Blanch?
Dost thou not joy?

Queen. Why, truly, yes, my liege;

Still yet amazement hath control of me.

But joy thou now, for short thy joy shall be! [*Aside.*]

King. Dispatch our swiftest couriers to France,
 With these glad tidings. Tell his majesty
 Our son doth seek his new-found daughter's hand;
 Her love he hath. Be it his gracious will,
 By marriage we'll cement our mighty powers,
 Which league shall grant more strength and glory ours.—
 Bid all our cannon thunder through the air,
 Our cymbals clang, our bugles, trumpets blare,
 Let every steeple ring its merry bell,
 For noise and gladness ever mingle well!
 Be swift to act. [*Exit attendants.*] This is a happy day;
 O that our bliss may have no parting way!

[*Ordnance, bugles, bells, trumpets, &c., sound without.*]

SCENE II. *A Room in the Palace.*

Enter the QUEEN and EDWARD.

Edward. What! poison? Didst say poison?

Queen.

Even so:

'Tis poison shall uncrown the king; crown thee.

Edward. Say not thou gav'st it him!

Queen.

What else shall say?

Death long hath lurk'd within his food and drink;

Infected so by me.—Have thou no fear;

All's hidden.

Edward. Richard lives, if the king do die.

Queen. Why, here's a thing for him. [*Shows poison.*]

Sweet Edward, dear,

The king will die; will not outlive this day.—

Poor Richard! O what sorrow shall be his!

Show we not mercy if we end his woe?

How end? By giving this.—What's this? Swift death!

Or if thou think'st such mercy's mercy not,

Why reason thus: all things must die; 'tis now,

Or then; to-day, to-morrow, this year, next;

But surely die; so Richard must; and what

Great crime haste we time's time for death to him?

Or thus: state funerals expensive are;

We'll show economy: one grave for two,

L. of C.

Two funerals in one will be less strain
Upon our coffers; saving thus are not
We public benefactors, son?

Edward. 'Tis true;
A pretty reason, reasoned prettily.
Ay, let him die: not for ourselves, our gain,
Our vantage, or the crown——

Queen. O no! Not these!
We be so base? 'Tis for the common weal,
The kingdom's good, curtailing great expense.

Edward. O happy subjects, having such a queen!
Give me the poison; I will find a way.

Queen. But one drop in his drink and then—farewell!
Yet, lest there be mischance, with venom tip
Thy sword; 'gage him somewhat in merry play,
And with a skillful stroke bark up his skin,
So that his blood may suck contagion.
Withal, have care; incense him not.

Edward. Trust me
To rage no lion. Richard soon shall be
In blackest night and deep eternity.

SCENE III. *A Hall in the Palace.*

Enter EDWARD.

Edward. My sword with bane is tipp'd; who's but
scratch'd dies.—

Come, fortune, smile on me.—Ho! Ho! What's here?

[*A cup on a table.*]

See! Richard's cup! his favorite trophy, won
By him in contest with great wrestlers;
'Tis fill'd with wine; most opportune is this:
But him none touch it.—Poison, to thy work!

[*Drops poison in cup.*]

O tasty wine, make tasteless him who tastes!
Now let him touch it, he shall touch no more,
For death lies there to touch who touches it.
Well, Richard, when thou drink'st another health,
Naught'll save thee then; not all the kingdom's wealth.
But soft? they come.

Enter RICHARD, WARWICK, BUCKINGHAM.

Warwick. Be of good comfort, Richard; death's not near.

Buckingham. 'Tis but another of the spells he's had.

Warwick. From which he did revive.

Buckingham. And will from this.

Richard. Ah! friends, I thank thee for thy kind intents.
To friends we look to cheer us in our gloom,
And I appreciate thy kindness, lords.
And yet thou know'st, I know, these are but words
That have no keeping with thy mind: but said
To comfort me.

Warwick. Take courage.

Buckingham. Cleave to hope;
It is the lantern lights the darkest night.

Richard. I am not given to discouragement;
Despair hath yet to boast a victory,
Nor fear hath ever blanch'd my youthful cheeks——

Warwick. True, true! Most true, my noble, valiant prince.

Richard. But who is it that doth not droop at death,
When death droops them that hang upon our love?
My honor'd father, my dear sire, thy liege,
Holds to this world but by a tiny thread;
One drop of oil's left in his burning lamp.
For heaven's sake, let's back unto his room.
For there I fear the hideous visitor,
That knocks at every door, hath forc'd his way,
And, grinning, sits to watch his wanton play,
As slowly he doth press the breath from him.

Edward. Is he so bad?

Richard. Worse than he's bad is death.

Edward. Will he not live? O say not he will die.

Richard. Ask Him above, whose will wills what He will.—

Who comes

Enter an ATTENDANT.

Attendant. My lord, they bring the king this way.

Richard. Why so?

Attendant. He craves for air, and even now,
Gasping so hard for breath, like one that drowns,
He plead to be set here; where he once more
May look upon the setting sun.

Richard. Alas!
Once more, once more, once meaning last but one;
Sad so to say: one look, then life is done.

Warwick. Here is his majesty.

Enter ATTENDANTS, carrying the KING in a large chair, followed by LORDS.

Buckingham. How fares your grace?

Richard. How doth your highness feel?

King. All pain, all woe;
All suffering, anguish, torture, dire distress.

Warwick. Stand back; crowd not around him so, my lords.

King. Ay, back, my friends; I would more air, more air.
My head scarce keeps above the rushing stream,
And I am delug'd with the want of breath.
Why, what is breath but air, what air but wind,
Which blows throughout my realm in wanton waste?
Yet I'm denied the little meet for life!
I, king of this great kingdom, cry for air,
When air is all about me everywhere.

Richard. O my dear father, could I breathe for thee;
Or give thee these fill'd lungs that thou gav'st me.

Warwick. [*Speaking low*] Why stand we idly here when
he's in pain?

Buckingham. [*Speaking low*] What can we do; the
doctors give him up.

Warwick. [*Speaking low*] How hard to see our dear,
belov'd ones die.

And have no power to lull their agony.

King. Speak not so loud, my lords: death's ear is quick;
I hear thee.—Richard, come thou, sit by me,
While I take my last loving leave of thee.

[*Richard sits by him.*]

Richard. O do not say thy last.

King.

My last, dear son.

I am a clock that nearly hath run down;
My works are rusted, batter'd, sore-abused;
My blood, the oil, is dried up with disease;
My heart, the pendulum, doth swing so slow
That scarce a moment waits the final beat,
When I, the king, shall stand before my King.

Richard. Give not away: this is not death, my liege;
Why, thou hast many happy days.

King.

'Tis death!

But God, none know so well as I 'tis death;
And who's that king that can withstand king death,
Save that great King who kings all earthly kings?
Never again shall I see rise the sun,
Never again gaze on the crescent moon,
Never again muse on the fiery stars,
Nor hear the warbling robins' matin songs,
Nor list unto the solemn vesper hymns,
Nor sit in state, nor view my ships of war,
Nor wield the mace, the sceptre, feast my friends,
Nor have my Richard or my loving wife:
O never, never, never, nevermore!
What now's my pomp, my majesty, my show?
What is a king? Of millions, but a one
Undone by ghastly death and by death done.
Where is the queen? Where's Blanch?

Richard.

Go; bid her come.

[*Exit attendant. Screams heard within.*]

King. What is the woe that strikes so high a note?
Is it the queen?

Enter GERTRUDE, wailing, followed by MARGARET.

Why hurries Blanch not here?

Gertrude. Alas, my liege, she's hurried from this world.

King. What! dead?

Richard. The queen dead?

Edward.

My dear mother!

Now do I topple from my lofty hope. [Aside.]

King. Strange are thy ways, O God! How did she end?

Gertrude. This lady here will tell. I am too full
Of fear and grief to say.

Richard. Quick, Margaret;
The king fails rapidly.

Margaret. It happen'd thus:
On going by her grace's room, just now,
Mine ear was split with piercing screams; I enter'd,
And saw death had attack'd her majesty,
Who by mistake some mortal poison had ta'en,
Whose power made powerless any known aid.

King. Was she in agony?

Margret. In mind, not body;
For there she had some horrid secrets stored,
Of wickedness and crime that were a bane
To her poor, sinful soul: these she confessed.

King. Go on; go on.

Margaret. Ambition was her fall:
Whose is it not that strives to rise through ill?
Her son she lov'd; thee, never; crav'd the throne
For him; the which to gain she took all hazard:
'Twas she that stirr'd the insurrection up,
Whose end was Bedford's end and Richard's glory;
'Twas she had Somerset slain in the tower,
Lest he betray her part; for he had been
Her chiefest tool.

King. Would I had died before!
I thought her love was mine as mine was hers.
What more?

Margaret. Richard she hat'd, for that he was
A bar to Edward; seeking to incense
Thee 'gainst him, she did imitate his hand,
And wrote the letter that gave thee such shock;
Her enmity to me was but a stab
At Richard: thus the witchcraft charge.

Richard. [Looking at Edward] O villainy! Another's
deep in this.

Edward. [Aside] I 'gin to tremble for myself.

King. More, more!

Margaret. More brings more blood: by her own hand
York died;

She stabb'd him with his servant's dagger,
Whose body then was cast down in a pit.

King. O fiendish woman! Can this be true?

Enter an ATTENDANT.

What news hast thou?

Attendant. My liege, a ghastly find:
Some workmen, 'gaged repairing the great well,
Found there a corpse so decompos'd that, but
For articles within his clothes had had
No recognition.

King. They did show him whom?

Attendant. York's servant!

King. Which doth prove him guiltless.
'Tis as Blanch said.—Is this the worst? [*To Margaret.*]

Margaret. Ah, no!

The worst is last; last worst. Wouldst hear?

King. Proceed;

But haste, or ere thy last will be my last.
I'm going fast.

Margaret. Poison's thy death; she gave
It thee; little by little thou took'st death;
When'er she fed thee, fed thee for thy grave.
For Richard she did have a swifter pass
Into eternity.

King. This tops them all!
O God! what's in a woman but deceit?
Beware of beauty; it will murder thee.
O Richard, I do die! Heaven be mine.

[*Dies.*]

Richard. My liege, my sire, my dear, dear father's dead!
O I could shed an ocean of salt tears,
And bow a forest with my sorrow's sighs!
But I'll not be the woman now, not now.—
There is a thing to do; then will I mourn.—
O villainous treason! Poison! blackest crime!
I have a score to settle here: revenge!
Ay, ay, another's deep in this: revenge!

[*Draws his sword.*]

Margaret. Be calm, my love.

Richard. My father's spirit bids
Me storm; I list to none but him. Up, sword!
What! Edward, tremblest thou? Shake, shake, thou
wretch!

For thou art now to shake from off this globe.

[*Starts at Edward.*]

Edward. My doom is come! Would I could flee. [*Aside.*]

[*Warwick and Buckingham hold Richard.*]

Warwick. Not here!

Buckingham. Not 'fore thy father's corpse!

Richard. What better place?

Heardst not me say another's deep in this?

There stands so mean, so small a villiain, lords,

There's scarce a hole in hell that's small enough

For him: to hell I'll send him, though.

Warwick and Buckingham. Hold! Hold!

Richard. [*Struggling*] Off, Buckingham! Off, Warwick,

Off! By God!

Who holds me now, no more I hold as friend!

[*Breaks away.*]

To work, thou trusty blade!

Edward. [*Fighting*] To work, it is.

'Tis said the worm doth turn if trod upon;

So I. If I but tip thee, thou shalt die.

Ho! Ho! thy death! [*Wounds Richard.*]

Richard. [*Runs Edward through*] And thine accursed
wretch! [*Edward falls.*]

Margaret. O Richard bleeds!

Richard. Fear not; 'tis but a scratch.

Edward. More fatal than a mountainous, gaping wound.

Warwick. [*Looking at wound*] There is more treason
here; see how it swells.

Richard. O I am faint; give me some drink, some
drink!

[*Margaret hands him the poisoned cup; he drinks.*]

Edward. I die; but Richard, thou art doubly dead!

The crown goes not to thee, for poison hath—— [*Dies.*]

Richard. His guilty soul hath fled.—What said he, lords?
"For poison hath": what?—Yet never mind;
I'm better now: what wondrous power hath wine.

Enter Doctor.

Who is this man?

Doctor. One that repeats thy death.

Thou canst not live; the wine thou drank'st is poisoned.

Margaret. O I have kill'd thee, Richard!

Richard. Who art thou?

Doctor. He that did sell the poisons to the queen.
The king is dead, I see; naught can save thee:
The wine is mortal.

Richard. Villain, I was faint
Till I did drink the wine; now well and strong.

Doctor. I do not understand; thou shouldst be dead;
For 'tis the swiftest draught in Christendom.—
What wound is this?

Richard. A scratch from Edward's sword;
Though slight, it keel'd me from sheer dizziness.

Doctor. His sword? Give me his sword: ay, now I see;
'Tis deadly tipp'd! a miracle; thou'rt saved!
And double treachery's o'erreach'd itself.

Richard. How double treachery?

Doctor. But so, my lord:
Two ways death set for thee: this poison'd sword,
The drink; which either would have ended thee.
But, having both, one venom 'stroyed the other.

Margaret. Then I did hand thee life, not death, my love.

Doctor. Ay, even so.

Richard. Thou knave, thou art accessory to
A heinous crime; know'st thou the penalty?

Doctor. 'Tis death; but yet no block or stake for me.
There is some wine left in the cup: I drink

[*Snatches cup; drinks.*]

I die! farewell to life and misery.

God pardon all my sins.

[*Dies.*]

Richard. Who comes, my lords?

Enter REGNAULT.

Regnault. I, Regnault, fresh from France, with welcome
news
For England's majesty.—What! dead? the king?

Warwick. The king that was is dead: here is the king.
[*Points Richard.*]

Regnault. How now? Three dead! Is this a sepulchre?
Death's reap'd rich harvest here. How struck he such
A heavy hand?

Richard. A tale too long for now,
But which I long to tell thee and the world,

To show black treason at its worst; what haunts
A king; what danger's in a crown.—What tidings?

Regnault. France sends his thanks and greetings unto
thee;

Warrants his love; approves thy marriage to
His daughter Margaret.

Warwick and Buckingham. Long life to France!

Richard. Come, Margaret, fair England's queen to be;
Our joy is after this solemnity.—
Drape all the kingdom in a mourning show.
God's will is done; to Him we'll ever bow.

[*Exit with Margaret.*]

Warwick. Philip is dead; thus kings do come and go:
Peace be to Richard till his time is so.





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